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LIFE

OF

ST. CLARE OF MONTEFALCO,

PROFESSED NUN OF THE ORDER OF HERMITS OF ST. AUGUSTINE.

Translated from the Italian of the

MOST REV. LAWRENCE TARDY,

FORMERLY VICAR-GENERAL OF THE AUGUSTINIAN ORDER,

BY

REV. JOSEPH A. LOCKE, O. S. A.

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

We herewith present to the public our English version of the Life of St. Clare of Montefalco, written in Italian by Father Tardy, O.S.A. We are not without good reasons for hoping that this little volume will prove both useful and agreeable to the English-speaking public. St. Clare's case is an extraordinary one, and well worthy the attention of the faithful. She died in the odor of sanctity in the year 1308, and within eighteen years from her death the entire tedious process of her canonization was completed, and nothing remained to be done but for the Holy Father to issue his declaration. This he had determined to do; but the circumstances of the times, not his will, interfered, and the decree was not issued. The cause then lay unnoticed for more than four centuries, when it was again taken up and again laid aside—for no apparent reason, as Benedict XIV. himself remarked. It was only after a lapse of nearly six centuries that it was finally brought to a successful issue under the present reigning Pontiff, Leo XIII., who canonized St. Clare on September 11, 1881.

Now, who does not see here evident signs of the finger of God? He who has arranged all things in number, weight, and measure, and without whose permission not even a hair may fall from our heads, is surely not without care for the honor and glory of His beloved servants the Saints. Can He who guards from corruption their mortal remains allow the blessed memory of their deeds and the sweet odor of their virtues to be lost through oblivion to succeeding generations? Certainly not. We are,

therefore, perfectly justified in concluding that it was by a special dispensation of Divine Providence that the canonization of St. Clare was deferred for so long a time and reserved for our own days. God in His far-reaching wisdom saw that the spirit of mortification and the love of the Cross of Christ, which were the leading characteristics of Clare's life, were just what were needed to remedy the evils of our times, and therefore He so arranged matters that her canonization did not take place till our day. He did not then neglect to guard the glory of His Saint, but merely chose for the procuring of it the time in which He knew that her example would be productive of most good. We do not make these statements on our own authority, for we thus read in the decree of her canonization issued by our Holy Father, Leo XIII.: "We may then cherish the hope that in these our times, when the love of the Cross has grown very cold in Christian society, and there are many enemies of the Cross of Christ, whose God is their belly and whose glory is in confusion, as the Apostle formerly lamented, it has happened by divine disposition that this virgin, who was most devout towards the Cross and Passion of Our Lord, should be raised to the supreme honors of the altar, so that through her example and prayers the love of the Cross and a zeal for it might be revived in the hearts and habits and daily life of Christians." Thus speaks our Holy Father, and it is with the intention of contributing our mite towards the realization of his holy hope that we have undertaken to render into English this little work. Apart from this, however, we do not hesitate to say that the biography of St. Clare will well repay perusal, containing as it does the record of a noble and saintly life, rich in the highest and holiest examples of virtue, and made surpassingly grand by the extraordinary endowments of Heaven.

The biography of St. Clare has been written by many authors, but the work which we have translated is the

Life written in Italian by Father Lawrence Tardy, of the Order of St. Augustine. This work was first published in the early part of the present century, but Dr. Martinelli, O.S.A., the last postulator of the cause of St. Clare, and the one who had the happiness to see her cause successfully terminated, issued a new edition of it, enriched with all the recent developments of the case, at the time of her canonization. It is on this last edition that our version is made. We have, however, made frequent use of the German version printed in Duderstadt in 1866, which contains many useful points not found in the Italian. The notes are all taken from the German edition. We have only to say, what the author himself says in his preface, that we do not wish in anything contained in this Life to anticipate the judgment of the Holy See, and do not attach to the wonderful events recorded here any more weight than the extrinsic arguments warrant. This book has been already translated into several of the European languages, and it is the earnest wish of the Rev. Postulator that it should be likewise presented to the English-speaking faithful. We have endeavored to fulfil that wish, and in so doing have acted the part merely of a faithful translator, sincerely hoping that our labor may redound to the honor of God, the glory of St. Clare, and the good of souls.

VILLANOVA COLLEGE,
Feast of St. Monica, 1884.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

THE Religious Order founded by that Light of Doctors, the great Augustine, towards the end of the fourth century, spread so rapidly, even during the lifetime of its holy founder, and became so famed for its sanctity and learning, that it soon not only peopled the solitudes of Africa and the entire West, especially after the dispersion caused by the persecution of the Vandals, but likewise supplied both priests and bishops to many churches. Augustine himself professed and practised the rule of his institute together with his friends and the companions of his travels, adventures, and conversion, first at Tagaste when a simple layman, and afterwards at Hippo when he was ordained priest and wished to unite to the duties of his august ministry the silence and austerity of the religious life in his suburban retreat. Not even when raised to the sublime dignity of the episcopate was he willing to abandon the calm and spiritual delights of this holy state. At first the Religious Institute of Augustine had no other centre of unity than the Rule of its holy founder, but it flourished nevertheless for upwards of eight centuries in the shadow of the woods and groves, far from the haunts of men and the turmoil of the world. These centuries, buried as they are in the darkness consequent upon the numerous irruptions of the swarming barbaric hordes into the fairest provinces of Europe, and the breaking up of the ancient civilization, have left no record to posterity of the many sainted Augustinian anchorites whose conversation was with God. In the thirteenth century, however, on the appearance of so many new Religious Orders, the Institute of Augustine, moved by a holy emulation, and at the

suggestion of the ecclesiastical authorities, commen
to unite the active to the contemplative life. In this
it soon became known to the people and could no lon
hide the light of its modest virtues. It was in the y
1256 that the various congregations of hermits who
lowed the Rule of St. Augustine were united by P
Alexander IV. and placed under one head, and in
first century of its existence the new Order gave to
ecclesiastical hierarchy more than a hundred prel
of every rank, and many doctors who filled the liter
world with the fame of their works. But what is m
the same Order gave in the same short time hundred
holy souls to Heaven, some of whom have been beati
and even canonized by the Church herself, whilst oth
have had their reputation for sanctity confirmed by
popular sentiment and by reliable historical writ
Amongst these brilliant luminaries of sanctity there w
two that shone forth more resplendently than the r
at the same time and within a short distance from e
other—the great wonder-worker St. Nicholas of To
tine and St. Clare of Montefalco. It is the lumin
deeds and unfading glory of this latter that I intend
put on record in the following pages.

Those who are more learned than I may employ th
pens in the treatment of more learned subjects: I do
envy them, but shall be abundantly content if I succ
in serving the piety of the faithful and exciting in th
hearts a lively devotion towards our Saint. And ind
the lives of the Saints form one of the noblest and m
interesting subjects that the pen of the Christian wr
can be employed on. In truth, what nobler spectacle
the Christian soul contemplate than the trophies w
by weak flesh over the enemies of God, and the glori
monuments of sanctity transmitted to the memory
ages whilst they are chanted in eternal hymns by
citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem? Here it is not
historian's province to offer the incense of flattery to

so-called heroes of the world, who have signalized themselves by usurpations, by the devastations of kingdoms and provinces, by the desolations of vanquished peoples, and by floods of human blood. Here he has rather to record victories the most glorious won over the infernal enemy and over the tyranny of human passions; he has to tell of a fortitude which is superior to all worldly attractions, to all earthly adversities, and which leads to the unfading crown of heavenly bliss. In fine, in writing the lives of the Saints the biographer does not need to prostitute his talents by lavishing praise on vice, but can reserve his eulogiums untainted for virtue alone. In this his object is not to augment the glory of the blessed, who, immersed in the ocean of eternal joys, have no need of our encomiums, but to excite men to the imitation of their virtues and to the chaste desire of fellowship with them in their happy lot. And what more efficacious means is there to excite a virtuous emulation in the hearts of men, who by their nature are so prone to imitate, than to lay before them the example of men like themselves, who were clothed with the same sinful flesh, were subject to like temptations, like dangers, and who nevertheless triumphed over all? Is it not true that in reading the life of a saint we find stirred up in our heart a strong enticement towards virtue itself simultaneously with a love and veneration for the hero who practised it? Holy Father Augustine, not to speak of many others, felt this impulse of which I speak whilst he listened to his friend Pontianus narrating to him the life of St. Antony. Therefore, as the Holy Ghost Himself tells us, "let us praise men of renown and our fathers in their generation." I, for my part, heartily rejoice in being able to consecrate my pen to the glorification of St. Clare. May God grant that this tribute of my devotion be pleasing in the sight of Heaven, at least through the merit of the intention!

I shall have very little trouble in writing the life of our

Saint, because there are no historical or chronolog
difficulties to be met with and settled. This happy
cumstance is due to the fact that the life of our her
was written by learned and contemporary authors,
its leading facts authenticated by the documents wl
were compiled for the cause of her canonization sho
after her death. Within ten months from that event
investigation into her life and miracles was ordered
the Bishop of Spoleto, and carried out by his vicar-g
eral Berengarius Donadei. This latter wrote her lif
the following year, and his work is still preserved in
convent of the Saint. Another investigation took p
in 1318, the records of which are likewise preserved.
was precisely from these records that Cardinal Napo
Orsini extracted a summary of her life in 1320. A
mentioning these documents there is no need of e
merating here the different authors that have wri
the life of our Saint at various times. If any one f
a curiosity to know them, we refer him to Torelli,
author of the Augustinian Annals, or to Piergigli, wh
his beautiful introduction to the life of our Saint w
he wrote in 1640, was able to enumerate even at
early date sixty-three authors who had either written
life or at least made mention of her merits. This wr
is precisely the one that we shall follow as our c
guide, not, however, to the exclusion of others.
reasons for this are that he was a native of Beva
near Montefalco, and lived for a long time in Montef
itself in quality of episcopal vicar, and likewise as
fessor to the nuns in the Saint's own convent. He
sequently had ample opportunity of examining the d
ments which were extant in his time in that monast
just as he afterwards had an equally good opportu
of examining the documents in the Angelica Librar
Rome. For these reasons the Bollandists themse
were very anxious to follow him, for they make men
of him as being preferable to other authors. Howe

not being well acquainted with the Italian language, they were obliged to content themselves with copying the compendium of Musconi, an author fully as reliable and as well-informed as Piergigli himself. Musconi had in his favor, in addition to his love of truth and his erudition, the fact that he was born at Trevi, near Montefalco, and likewise that he had examined in his capacity of lawyer and vicar-general all the authentic writings on the life and miracles of the Saint—writings which he afterwards quoted in his introduction to her life. These are the guides that I shall follow, occasionally, however, having recourse to others; and I trust that on this point there will be nothing to be said against me.

As to my style of writing, some may be of the opinion that I have indulged too much in amplification. To these I would reply that I am not conscious of having followed my imagination alone in anything that I have said, but have only drawn either the necessary or very probable consequences from well-authenticated facts. Others may find my style lacking in simplicity and savoring too much of the style of a panegyric; but in these matters tastes differ, and my opinion is that no eulogium is too great or too grand for the merits and sanctity of St. Clare.

It is fitting that I should here make declaration, in accordance with the decrees of Pope Urban VIII., that I do not intend that the reader should place greater faith in the supernatural events recorded here, and which have not been confirmed by the authority of the Holy See, than the testimony in each case calls for. The facts which I have related, however, are drawn from the authentic records of the process for Clare's canonization. Nothing more remains for me to say except to beg our heroine to obtain for me from God purity of intention in this and all my works, and the grace not to defraud her of her glory or disappoint the pious expectations of her devout admirers.

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LIFE OF ST. CLARE OF MONTEFALCO.

CHAPTER I.

Time of St. Clare's Birth.

A HASTY glance at the time in which St. Clare was born suffices to bring before the mind a period of endless wars and of the most direful calamities. Eighteen years before the birth of the Saint (A.D. 1250), Frederic II. had died, a monarch who had rendered himself famous by the devastation of so many cities and towns; by his oppression of the people and his treachery; by his persecution of the Pope, of bishops, and of many churches; and finally by the seeds of long-continued discord which he had sown in Italy. Three years before the birth of the Saint, Frederic's illegitimate son Manfred, the usurping monarch of the two Sicilies, had lost his throne and life in the bloody battle of Beneventum, and was succeeded by his rival, Charles of Anjou. But not on this account did the woes of Italy come to an end. With the exception of the two Sicilies this unfortunate country found itself, not merely divided up into as many kingdoms or republics as it contained cities, but, worse still, torn asunder by the most bitterly hostile factions. The imperial throne was vacant for a time; but during the interregnum the Ghibelline party fomented feuds. Nor were their opponents, the Guelph party, less at fault; for they, too, sought for a share in the spoils and conquests, under the specious pretext of adhesion to the Pope and the Church. For a long period the name of peace was scarcely known in these fair countries. City was arrayed against city, and oftentimes

within the same walls the citizens of different classes, as the people and the nobility, were arrayed against each other. Sedition, treason, exile, confiscation, private revenge, extortion, murder, and general ruin:—such was the lamentable burden under which Italian society groaned. Peace and security had fled even from Rome, although at that time most worthy Pontiffs occupied the chair of St. Peter. These latter found themselves obliged to change their residence continually, being at one time in Viterbo, at another in Orvieto, again in Perugia. It was only at the time of St. Clare's birth that peace began to appear in Italy. At that time the formidable army of the Ghibellines which fought under the standard of Conradin, the grandson of the above-mentioned Frederic, was defeated at Tagliacozzo, near Aquila. Conradin had set out from Germany in order to contest the throne with Charles of Anjou, but lost his life at Naples. With him disappeared the Suabian dynasty, so hateful to the Guelph party and still more detested by the ambitious and vindictive Charles of Anjou, brother by blood of St. Louis, King of France, but thoroughly unlike him in his habits. In that century ambition, avarice, and licentiousness held sway throughout Italy. In addition, the Greek schism was renewed by Michael Paleologus, and the holy places of the East again brought under the sacrilegious and tyrannical sway of the infidels. For the still greater misfortune of holy Church the Manicheans again appeared, a sect which, in addition to its ancient errors, committed the most shameful enormities; the Beguins too, who, under the coarse mantle of hypocrisy, concealed alike false doctrines and infamous practices.

But not on this account must it be imagined that the gates of hell prevailed. At this time as well as at others the words of the Apostle proved true: "Where sin hath abounded, there also hath grace abounded." It was precisely at this time that God, by a singular dispensation of His mercy, raised up the most illustrious champions

origin of the spiritual warfare in order to stem the torrent of vice. It was then, too, that the holy auxiliary troops of the Church appeared for the first time in Italy to fight under the standard of Jesus Christ—that is to say, the Religious Orders: the Franciscans, Dominicans Servites, or Servants of Mary, the Sylvestrines, and Celestines. It was then that the ancient Order of the Carmelites was extended, the two Orders for the Redemption of Captives were founded, one in Spain and the other in France, both of which soon spread themselves to Italy; still further, the Order of the Hermits of St. Paul was founded, and the general reunion of the Hermits of St. Augustine took place. A short time previous to the death of our Saint many great and illustrious servants of God flourished in the Church. Amongst others may be mentioned St. William of Denmark,* St. Felix of Valois, St. John of Matha, St. Albert Martyr, St. Francis and St. Dominic, founders of the two great religious Orders which bear their names, the seven Franciscan martyrs, St. Engelbert Martyr, St. Antony of Padua, St. Elizabeth, Queen of Hungary, St. Hedwige, Queen of Poland, St. Peter Martyr, St. Clare of Assisi, St. Peter Nolasco, St. Hyacinth, St. Sylvester Abbot. But contemporaneously with our Saint there flourished outside of Italy St. Raymond of Pennafort, St. Louis, King of France, St. Louis, Bishop of Toulouse, St. Ivo, St. Elizabeth, Queen of Portugal. Even within the bosom of Italy itself, all disturbed and corrupted as it was, God raised up a still greater number of holy souls for the support and ornament of His Church. Such were, for example, St.

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* St. William was born in Paris in the year 1105, joined the Canons Regular of St. Augustine, and was afterwards sent to Denmark to take charge of a convent there. He contributed much by his zeal towards furthering the interests of the faith throughout Denmark, and died, after suffering many persecutions and much sickness, at the advanced age of 91 years. Many miracles were wrought through his intercession both before and after his death.

Thomas of Aquin and St. Bonaventure, the two great Doctors of the Church; St. Philip Benitius,* an ardent propagator of the faith and of the Order of the Servants of Mary; St. Peter Celestine, who preferred the lowliness of a hidden life to all the splendor of the papal throne; St. Nicholas of Tolentine, that angel in the flesh, martyr of penance, worker of so many and such great miracles, and glory of the Augustinian Order; St. Margaret of Cortona, so famous for her austere, penitential life; and those great servants of God, St. Agnes of Monte Pulciano, St. Juliana of Falconeri, and St. Angela of Foligno. And here it is well to remark that these great saints whom we have mentioned, with very few exceptions, belonged to the Religious Orders which were lately founded. It would be no easy task, indeed, to extract from the annals of these Orders the record of the innumerable servants of God who flourished in them in that century, and whom the voice of the people or the authority of the Holy See has declared blessed. The Order of the Hermits of St. Augustine alone counts more than a hundred such in this century; how great would be their number, then, if we counted those of all the Orders combined, especially those of the wide-spread Franciscan and Dominican Orders!

Such were the Orders and such the saints that God's mercy opposed to the disorders of the times, and that sustained the Church, menaced as she was by such dreadful dangers. Nor must we forget to mention as contributing greatly to the checking of disorder the striking, numerous, austere, and fervent processions of the Confraternities which took place in that century, and date their

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* St. Philip Benitius was General of the Order of Servites, and contributed much by his zeal and prudence towards the spreading of that Order. Reliable authorities state that the number of members of this young Order in Italy, France, and Germany reached, during his administration, to 10,000. He died August 22d, 1285.

from a time shortly prior to the birth of St. Clare. These produced, at least for some time, the richest fruits in the shape of sacraments frequented, reconciliations brought about, exiles recalled to their native country, property restored to rightful owners, and arms laid aside. But not even here was God's providence in favor of His Church content to stop; for He entrusted her guidance at that period to Popes eminent for their wisdom and sanctity. In this class Clement IV. is especially worthy to be reckoned, a Pontiff of lofty holiness and profound learning. From Viterbo, where he was forced to reside through the inconstancy and disloyalty of the Romans, he governed the Church as wisely as the difficult circumstances of the time permitted. He died there towards the end of November, A.D. 1268, a time when the imperial throne was still vacant. It was in this very year that St. Clare first saw the light.

In the duchy of Spoleto,* and diocese of the same name,

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* History, especially that of the Middle Ages, speaks much of the riches and revolutions of the duchy of Spoleto. In the sixth century it was under the dominion of the Lombards, was afterwards ruled by its own dukes, till finally, after many vicissitudes, it fell into the hands of the Popes. Among its towns and cities are reckoned Nocera, Assisi, Bevagna, Foligno, Trevi, Terni, Rieti, Norcia, Leonissa, and Spoleto, the capital of the province, and formerly only an episcopal see, but made an archbishopric in 1821. Its products are abundant and various, but it is especially rich in olives and wine. It is abundantly watered by seven small streams that flow into the Tiber. But this duchy is still more remarkable in the history of the Church for the many holy places it contains, and for the many illustrious servants of God who led there a penitent and holy life. Subasio, Serra Santa, and Monte-Luco remind us of the austere penitents that inhabited these solitudes. Assisi, with Portiuncula near by, brings to our mind the great St. Francis, and a host of saints belonging to the Order which he founded, who dwelt there. Norcia points with pride to St. Benedict, the Patriarch of the monks of the West, as also to his sister St. Scholastica, equally famed with St. Clare of Assisi. Both can with truth be called the spiritual mothers of innumerable holy virgins. The other towns mentioned above, and even the country

near to Bevagna, Foligno, and Terni, lies, in a southerly direction, on the brow of a pleasant hill, surrounded both east and west by a delightful valley, the little town of Montefalco. The place with its strong walls can be seen for a great distance. It had been built anew from the ruins of the neighboring Coccorano, which Frederic II., the ravager of Italy, had destroyed. There lived here, at the period above described, a happy couple, joined together in the holy unity of Christian wedlock. The man's name was Damian, and his wife was called Giacoma. Both belonged to highly respectable families, and were neither very rich nor very poor, but lived contented with that moderate sufficiency which Solomon praises, and which neither foments pride through superfluity nor dishonesty through want. Their nobility and their riches consisted in the holy fear of God, in the faithful fulfilment of the duties of their state, in the pious bringing up of their children—in a word, in the acquisition of the

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places, have likewise their saints. Thus, to mention merely a few of the Order of St. Augustine, Spoleto has the Blessed Christina, who died in 1458, and whose feast is celebrated in the Augustinian Order on the 14th February; Rieti honors on the 2d August Blessed John, who died in 1347; Foligno has the Blessed Juliana, who flew to her heavenly Bridegroom in the year 1300, adorned with the double crown of sanctity and virginity; likewise Blessed Angelus, who, famed for miracles both before and after death, departed this life A.D. 1296. But to come back to Montefalco, it may be remarked, without entering upon a long description, that it contains a cathedral church, two parishes within the walls and two without. It has, moreover, several convents: one of the Augustinians, one of the Conventuals, one of the Observants, one of the Capuchins, and a house of the Oratorians; likewise two convents for women, one of the Augustinian nuns, and the other of the Franciscan nuns of St. Leonard. In addition to all this it has the glory of possessing the bodies of many saints, as St. Fortunatus, St. Severus, the Blessed Johanna, sister of St. Clare, the Blessed Clarella and Illuminata, pupils of St. Clare (both died about 1310), and Blessed John and Francis of the Franciscan Order. But amongst all these the body of St. Clare is most remarkable for its extraordinary state of preservation and life-like freshness.

unfading treasures of heaven. For this reason the Lord wished to bless them in a singular manner even here on earth. The fruits of the Divine blessing were that of them were born two holy children, namely, Blessed Johanna, of whom we shall have occasion to speak hereafter, and St. Clare, who was born, as we said before, in the year 1268, in the pontificate of Clement IV. The precise day or month when she was born is not known, probably because at that time more attention was paid to collecting memorials of piety than to recording dates. But, as it avails nothing to be born to the world and then die in sin, these pious parents were most solicitous in presenting on the earliest occasion their child at the saving font of Baptism, in order that, being cleansed by its regenerating waters from the stain of original sin, she might become a fit subject for heaven. So it happened; for here we may place the commencement of that innocence which she never sullied, and of her sanctity, as will be seen in the course of her life.

CHAPTER II.

Childhood of St. Clare.

BAPTISM, it is true, cancels original sin itself, but the penalties which flow from that sin accompany us to the grave; and hence it is that even from our birth the development of inordinate passions is noticeable in us. Even while still in swaddling-clothes we can notice in children the signs of impatience and reluctance, which manifest themselves in tears, cries, contortions, and impotent threats. We can notice in them a certain envy and jealousy of the maternal caresses. Scarcely have they made their first weak attempt at walking, when the spirit of liberty and independence shows itself by their disdaining the mater-

nal correction. Scarcely do they begin to prattle when they mingle dissimulation and lies with their broken words. The sense of taste, too, at first content with the mother's milk, is no longer satisfied even with dainties, but causes the tiny hand to be stretched out to commit little thefts; so that we may say with truth that the passions increase in proportion as the body gains strength. But our Clare seemed in some manner privileged and exempt from these childish weaknesses, inasmuch as she had received from God a good soul, or rather disposition, and had been in a special manner prevented by the blessings of grace. Scarcely did she open her lips to speak when she learned the chief prayers of the Christian, as well as the first elements of our holy faith, which her good mother was careful to teach her, and which sank like the dew of heaven into the tender heart of the holy child. She also learned early to reverence the crucifix and the images of the saints. It was really touching to see her with joined hands, eyes uplifted towards heaven, and on bended knees, at her mother's feet, or elsewhere alone, adoring and invoking her Creator ere yet, by reason of her tender age, she seemed capable of knowing Him.

But a certain circumstance showed, a little later on, in a still clearer and more wonderful manner the high destiny to which the heavenly Spouse of souls called her almost with impatience. As she found herself one day in her mother's arms, in passing before the church of St. John the Baptist, she perceived coming thence an odor of wonderful sweetness which drew her thither with an irresistible attraction. And behold! the child bounds from its mother's bosom and runs towards the church after the odor of the ointments of her divine Spouse, where having arrived, she found herself wonderfully refreshed by these emanations of Paradise. Who can fitly describe or thoroughly penetrate these singular favors, these anticipated heavenly illuminations, these

first tender affections, these caresses and sweet preludes of divine love! We only know that she found herself drawn to such a degree by those sweetnesses that she could no longer remain away from that place where she had received the first fruits of grace. She went there often, and spent there, hidden in some corner, the time which was not interfered with by her duties towards her parents. On such occasions she found intense joy in the company of her beloved Jesus, and He, to reward her, made known to her in a vision the chief events of the life to which He called her. It was exactly at this church of St. John the Baptist that the Blessed Angelo of Foligno, of the Order of St. Augustine, founded some years later, when Clare was about seventeen years old, the present convent of his Order; and this spot the Saint held in special favor during her lifetime, on account of the spiritual blessings there bestowed on her.

With such extraordinary beginnings it is not to be wondered at that Clare soon after, although still a child of from four to six years, applied herself assiduously to the practice of prayer, so that she sometimes spent entire hours in this holy exercise. Nay, at times she prolonged her devotions even to three or four hours, selecting for this purpose, as far as possible, the higher and less frequented parts of the house. There, in imitation of her divine Redeemer, she prayed on bended knees and with the deepest recollection, and in this manner laid the foundation of her future sanctity. But, what is still more remarkable, she loved even then to mortify her innocent and tender flesh with scourges which she had woven together from little cords, as well as with prolonged vigils and frequent abstinence. When but five years old, she was often heard to cry aloud, as she passed along in the open air, "Mercy, O Lord, mercy!" as though she were the greatest of sinners, at the same time beating her breast and piercing it with prickly chestnut-burs: so strong even then was her horror of

sin, and so intense her desire to follow Jesus along the path of suffering!

But one of her principal enjoyments was to listen to conversations about God and His saints; and in consequence, instead of wasting her time in the frivolous games so common to children of her age, she was wont to visit, either alone or accompanied by her maid, the different hermitages in the neighborhood in which certain pious women dwelt, leading a life of penance. These hermitages were little houses wherein these pious souls lived, apart from their family and the distractions of the world, without professing any particular rule or wearing any distinctive dress. For their guide to perfection they had the Gospel, the example of Jesus Christ, and obedience to their bishop, their confessor, and their superior. These hermitages became afterwards, as it were, the nurseries of many convents. At the time of St. Clare there were four of these at Montefalco, one of which was called the Damian Hermitage, because it had been built by the father of our Saint to satisfy the longing of his eldest daughter, Johanna, who wished to retire from the world and consecrate herself entirely to God. It was situated directly opposite the Hospital of St. Leonard, and was built in 1273. These hermitages, then, but especially that of her sister, St. Clare loved to visit. From these holy places there seemed to her to proceed sweet attractive odors, like unto that which had previously attracted her to the church of St. John the Baptist. And whilst these holy virgin recluses spoke to her of heavenly things, the Lord spoke to her heart with such sweetness and efficacy that she oftentimes appeared as if in ecstasy. Already the Saviour spoke to her these words: "Blessed are they who hear the Word of God and keep it." Such was this child of from five to seven years; such was St. Clare at this tender age!

CHAPTER III.

Entrance of St. Clare into the Hermitage of her Sister, the Blessed Johanna.

LARE had scarcely reached the age of six years when she already perceived with dread the dangers of the world, and so resolved to quit it. Although she was blest with a natural disposition which wholly disinclined her to indulge in worldly vanities; although she was subject to none of those failings so common amongst children; although she showed, even from her infancy, that her mind was of a grave and steady character, and manifested, too, a piety far beyond her years; although, in fine, she saw in her father's house nothing but examples of virtue, nevertheless she did not deem herself safe enough, but felt herself impelled by these very reasons to retire from the world. The very grace of God which guided her in the world led her likewise to solitude. And what place more suitable for her to retire to than the arms of her sister Johanna, who was already treading the thorny path of sanctity? Where could she find a more fitting asylum for her innocence than in that cloister which was still in all the fervor of its recent foundation? There remained, however, one difficulty to be overcome, a difficulty to which nature is keenly sensitive—that, namely, of bidding farewell to her loving and affectionate parents. But the love of God, which already ruled in her heart before the age when reason usually dawns, rendered easy for her this victory over herself, her affections, and every human consideration. Filled with generous thoughts, she betook herself to her sister Johanna, to disclose to her her interior and expose her ardent desires. And oh! how the holy child must

have pleaded with all the eloquence of her own simple, touching language to be admitted into this long-desired haven of rest! Whether Johanna considered her little sister too young to undergo the austerities of the hermitage, or wished to test her vocation, we cannot tell. The fact is, however, she refused her admission. But Clare lost not on this account her confidence in God, but renewed her request from time to time amidst prayers and tears, promising to fill all requirements with God's help. Her sister finally relented, and promised to admit her into her hermitage after a time; that is, after having recommended herself to God with greater earnestness, and so become assured of the divine will. But the devil, who is the eternal enemy of pious resolutions, and resists with an infernal envy every effort to acquire sanctity, sought by every artifice to hinder the execution of Clare's designs. At first he sought to turn her away from her holy resolution by suggesting to her mind plausible reasons against it, assuming at one time the appearance of her sister, at another that of some companion, but always concealing his malicious suggestions under the garb of love and pity. Finding that this did not succeed, he assumed the appearance of an old, deformed woman, and presented himself before her on the road which led to her sister's hermitage, and threatened to take away her life if she did not change her resolution. In order to frighten her more effectually, he added that he had been previously instrumental in the death of her little sister, Theodoruccia. This latter had died, while yet an infant, before Clare was born. The rarer and more extraordinary such apparitions of the evil spirit are in the lives of ordinary persons, so much the more frequent are they in the lives of the saints. For their exalted virtue awakens in him the deepest feelings of envy; and, besides, God frequently permits such things to happen to His beloved ones to increase their merit and their glory. But what can the

powers of darkness ever effect against God and His saints? Clare, though young and inexperienced, assisted by the light of Heaven, discovered and eluded all the snares of the evil one; and, by invoking the name of God and making the sign of the cross, she became deaf to all his enticements and threats. She thus proved that her love for God made her stronger than all the powers of death and hell.

When these diabolical efforts had been overcome, and the holy child persisted in importuning her sister to receive her into her hermitage, there came to Montefalco, by an interposition of divine providence, Thomas Angeli, who at that time (the pontificate of Gregory X.) ruled as bishop the extensive diocese of Spoleto. Blessed Johanna presented herself before him, with Andriola, the companion of her retirement, and Clare, her sister, entreating him to give his blessing to their new foundation, and allow Clare to be received therein. It is probable that he had heard beforehand of Clare's extraordinary virtue, which, in a child of such tender years, had awakened the admiration of all who knew her; nevertheless he determined to test her vocation still further. But when he saw the humility and modesty of her demeanor, and noticed the simplicity and uprightness of her answers, he recognized the assistance of the Holy Ghost, received her with kindness, consoled her, and finally granted her request. He then accompanied all three to the hermitage, assured them of his fatherly solicitude, and appointed Blessed Johanna Superioress of the house. They were all overjoyed; but for Clare this was, so to speak, the day of her nuptials, a day of the greatest happiness. Great indeed must be the joy of him who, having suffered shipwreck and reached the shore, contemplates therefrom the awful perils of the deep which he has just escaped: but it is not so great as was the joy of Clare when she stood upon the threshold of her new retreat and bade farewell to the world. The

eyes of the worldly-minded would have seen in that humble place into which she entered naught but gloom, poverty, and austerity; but in the eyes of Clare, enlightened by a lively faith, it was a haven of rest, a place of supernatural delights, that enclosed garden of the Canticle, where the mystic King of Peace deigns to impart His fondest caresses to the soul that has chosen Him for her bridegroom. We know not, it is true, the language in which Clare expressed her thanks to that God who holds in His hands the hearts of men and disposes of all things for the best. We do know, however, that her joy and gratitude were such that for an entire week she was almost wholly forgetful of food, contenting herself with a small piece of bread and an apple. But let us here leave her alone with God, pouring forth to Him those lively sentiments of gratitude in her own childish and imperfect language.

CHAPTER IV.

Early Life of St. Clare in the Hermitage.

T IS by a special gift of His predilection and goodness that God calls one from the distractions and temptations of the world into solitude to speak there to his heart. Clare knew this from her earliest years; and we have seen in the preceding chapter the gratitude she manifested towards God for having made her the object of so special a grace. Let us now prepare ourselves to witness the still greater thankfulness she exhibited when she found she had attained the object of her most ardent wishes, her fondest aspirations. Here, all at once, she offered herself up in sacrifice to the Most High, by seven difficult resolutions, which she formed of her own accord. The first of these was to keep her mind always fixed on

God; the second, never to look a man in the face; the third, to obey her superior rigorously and in all things; the fourth, to observe with exactness the silence commanded by her rule; the fifth, to avoid even the slightest imperfections; the sixth, to humble her body by mortification; the seventh, never to eat meat, or any food that might gratify her taste. So pleasing to God was this heroic sacrifice, accompanied as it was by an immediate and strict fulfilment, that He was pleased to give her a signal proof of His satisfaction.

Clare was at this time in her seventh year. One day, as she was praying with more than ordinary fervor, there appeared to her a richly dressed lady, holding by the hand a child of heavenly beauty, which, to judge from external appearances, was about seven years of age. The lady was the Queen of Heaven, and the child was her divine Son Jesus. Clare felt herself moved by an inward feeling to approach more closely to the child in order to contemplate better His heavenly beauty. The child, however, anticipated her wish, and ran joyfully towards her, illuminating her intellect with a ray of His light, making her understand who He was and how ardently He longed to become the spouse of her soul, demanding in return simply her undivided love. Let those who are able consider here the sentiments of her soul, the affections of her heart, in those happy moments during which she was the object of such favors. Let them meditate especially upon the joy which filled her soul when she celebrated her nuptials with the Lamb. Undoubtedly, feelings of the purest and tenderest love, mingled with the most profound humility, filled her soul. Henceforward no creature could find a place in the affections of that soul which had consecrated itself entirely to Jesus; for, if she bestowed any love upon creatures, her love for them was always subordinate to that which she gave to God. On other occasions, too, she experienced a like happiness; that is to say, she saw her Beloved One, the

Spouse of her soul, fondled Him, received and returned His infantile caresses. These apparitions were in truth naught but the inventions of God's love to draw to Himself more and more the heart of Clare.

It is thus God acts with His saints, conducts them in various ways to perfection, entices them, strengthens them, especially in the beginning of their spiritual life. But Clare stands forth as specially privileged among the holy ones of God, as well by reason of the early period at which she received these favors as by their frequency. These were for her the strongest incentive to piety as well as to the exact fulfilment of her arduous resolutions. In point of fact, how closely soever her Superioress and her own companions watched her conduct, they could conceive no other feeling but admiration for her modesty, her obedience, her spirit of retirement, penance, and prayer. In proof of this we need only mention that so mindful was she of her compact with God with reference to guarding her eyes, that not only did she keep them cast down in presence of strange men, but she observed a like conduct towards her father and her brother. Silence, too, was more pleasing to her than talking is to most women, and there was no case in which she deemed herself exempt from its observance when it was prescribed by the Superioress. On one occasion Blessed Johanna fell sick, and her mother visited her in order to pay her the necessary attendance. Clare helped her mother in the sick-room, and waited on her sister with love and respect; but always without speaking, if it was time of silence. And if on any occasion she was conscious of having broken silence, she atoned for her involuntary fault by rigid penance, as will be afterwards seen.

What shall we say of her zeal in the holy exercise of prayer? If when still a child, as we have already observed, and before she had received those special favors of which we have made mention, she was so anxious to

commune with God, we need hardly inquire what was her fervor and constancy afterwards in this holy exercise. With reference to this matter it is sufficient to make mention of the mode of prayer adopted by her whilst in the hermitage and followed out during her entire life. She was accustomed to adore the Divine Majesty with many genuflections, accompanied by just as many ejaculations, and she occupied herself especially with meditations on the passion of Jesus Christ. Her obedience, too, was something heroic. To show this we adduce the following instance: Blessed Johanna was wont to rise at midnight in order to pray. She oftentimes invited Clare to join her, and assigned her a place in the oratory, telling her to remain there in prayer till she herself called her away. Now, it happened more than once that Blessed Johanna remained there for a long time, forgetful of her sister, being either absorbed in prayer or distracted by various matters; but Clare kept her place without moving. When she was advised by her companions to leave, at least to take some food, she alleged her duty of obedience. On one occasion when she could not be prevailed upon to leave, an egg was brought to her, which she ate at the place where she knelt; but of this she afterwards repented as though it were a great sin, and did penance for it. At another time Blessed Johanna received in charity a little meat, which she distributed among her religious. Clare, too, received her share, but afterwards threw it away secretly. She grew sorry for the deed later on, believing that it was contrary to the virtue of obedience. With reference to her clothing, she deemed linen too great a luxury after her entrance into the cloister, and in consequence contented herself with a coarse woollen dress and a cloak, which the religious at that time used when not engaged in their domestic occupations; that is to say, in the church and at the grating.

Clare was now twelve years of age, and so believed herself obliged to increase her penitential austerities in

proportion as she advanced in bodily strength. In the cloister she went about in bare feet, clothed with a coarse woollen garment, oftentimes even in hair-cloth. At night, when her companions slept, she disciplined her tender body with a scourge made of hempen cords, and frequently unto blood. One day Sister Thomasia accidentally found this scourge. It was all covered with blood; and she, knowing it to be Clare's, brought it to Johanna, the Superioress, that she might put a stop to such austerities. This, however, did not cause Clare to desist from her rigorous penance; for though the Superioress had often advised Clare to be more moderate, yet she had given her no formal command to that effect. Her bed and place of repose even in sickness was a coarse sack; but she slept much oftener on the bare ground. Not content even with this rigor, she often slept in a sitting posture, with her head against the wall or else resting on a piece of wood in the shape of a cross, which she kept in her cell. Her food was barley or rye bread, which she often strewed with ashes, and soup made tasteless by being mixed with water. It was only on extraordinary occasions that she allowed herself the use of a little wine. On occasion of an attack of sickness she felt a great longing for some cheese. Her brother Francis brought her some mouldy bread instead of cheese. Clare ate it with the greatest submission, and experienced exactly the taste of cheese. God wished by this miracle to show how well pleased He was with her forgetfulness of self, and granted her the additional favor of being ever afterwards indifferent to the quality of her food.

Notwithstanding all this, we must not imagine that the saints are exempt from every failing. Clare, too, was a daughter of Adam; but her horror of sin was such that for the smallest faults, even involuntary violations of rule, she did the most rigorous penance. Thus on one occasion she transgressed the rule of silence in order to

speak to her mother. For this she laid upon herself the punishment to walk barefooted on the snow in extreme cold whilst she recited the Our Father one hundred times. She experienced the greatest regret if she at any time gave occasion to her sister to speak to her on any matter, even the most trifling; she begged pardon with tears, and promised amendment. Johanna once noticed that Clare slept with one foot not entirely covered, and spoke to her about it, saying that it was not becoming. Clare took the correction with humility, and, that it might not again occur, ever afterwards tied the clothes at night to her feet. But here is something still more extraordinary, which illustrates still better Clare's wonderful love for penance. The Superioress wished that Clare should share in the public penances often inflicted on Sister Andriola, in order that the latter might be encouraged to undergo them with less dissatisfaction. Clare not merely consented to this with pleasure, as though she had been an accomplice in all the faults of her companion, but begged still further that she might be permitted to share in all the punishments that at any future time might be imposed on Andriola. Her request was granted, and henceforward, up to the time when she became Superioress, scarcely a punishment was imposed on her companion that Clare did not regard as her own. In this wise did she seem anxious to imitate her Crucified Spouse, who took upon Himself the sins of the entire world.

The Prophet David, turning to the Lord, beautifully said, "O Lord, according to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart Thy comforts have given joy to my soul;" and Clare could well say the same. It was during prayer that the Lord usually poured into the soul of His beloved penitent the honey of His consolations. The sweetness that then filled her breast, and her ardor, were so great that not only did her soul languish with love, but her body likewise grew weak. Her heart was so in-

flamed with love, during these happy moments, that she was often obliged to retire either into the little court-yard or the garden, in order to cool her burning fervor. Here, with hands and face raised towards heaven, she gave vent to her fondest affections in those soliloquies and ejaculations which she addressed to her Uncreated Love. Clare's prayers and meditations had for their chief object the passion of Jesus Christ; and, in order that her soul might derive greater profit from these exercises, she begged of her Crucified Spouse, with all the confidence of a lover, that she might witness His entire passion, so that she could the better enter into the contemplation of it. Jesus was pleased to hear her prayers; and so those sorrowful scenes, the most sorrowful the world has ever witnessed, were made visible to the mind of Clare, enlightened as it was by grace. She saw the entire course of His sufferings from the Last Supper to His burial: she saw the bloody sweat in which His limbs were bathed in Gethsemane's garden; she saw the treacherous kiss of Judas, and the unworthy seizure of His sacred person; she heard the tumult that took place in the public places of Jerusalem, before the tribunals, and on Mount Calvary; she witnessed the flight of the Apostles and disciples, the scoffs of the soldiers and the populace, and the cruelties of His executioners; she saw the scourges, the thorns, the nails, His cruel crucifixion and Mary's suffering; she heard the loving words which Jesus spoke in the garden, before the tribunals, when bearing His cross, and on Calvary; she saw the sacred body of the King of Glory mangled, bruised, and pierced with a lance; and, entering into the very hearts of Jesus and Mary, she was given to understand their unutterable grief; in a word, she saw as though she were present all the events of His cruel passion, and began to understand what an enormous price the Man-God was obliged to pay for the redemption of her soul and of the entire world. This vision acted as fuel to her burning, sym-

pathetic love. And, in order that this love might never grow less, but, on the contrary, might burn daily more and more brightly in her heart, she oftentimes, when meditating on His passion, begged her Jesus to renew this vision; and Jesus, who could refuse nothing to His beloved one, opened again before her mental gaze the vast field of His frightful sufferings.

Though gifted with such a spirit and endowed with such extraordinary favors, Clare had not yet enjoyed the consolation of partaking of the adorable sacrament of the Eucharist. Undoubtedly, her merit, even from her tenderest years, exceeded that of thousands and thousands of adults; but it was not customary at that time to admit children at so early an age to the Holy Table. Besides, her great humility, a virtue opposed to all singularity, made her deem herself unworthy of so great a favor. But the time had now arrived when her ardent desires for this blessing were to be satisfied. Johanna made known to her the will of God and of her confessor, and told her to prepare herself to receive Jesus Christ in the holy Sacrament of the Altar in company with the other Sisters. On receiving this intimation the youthful virgin rejoiced exceedingly; and, retiring to an obscure place, buried herself in the contemplation of this tremendous mystery, and experienced in her soul sentiments of humility and love, of confusion and joy, of her own nothingness and God's infinite condescension. When the moment for receiving came, and Johanna had made a sign to Clare to approach the Lord's Table, the latter rose, but was so overpowered with her feelings that she forgot the cloak which the religious were wont to use on such occasions. Johanna noticed this and reproved Clare, accusing her of carelessness and indevotion, and forbade her to approach the Holy Table for that morning. Clare was greatly grieved at this, but she quickly rose superior to her feelings, prostrated herself on the ground, confessed her fault, and retired to a corner of

the oratory, there to beg pardon of her Jesus with tears, and entreat Him to accept at least her communion of desire, and to deign to console her. She was soon fully comforted; for her divine Bridegroom showed Himself visibly to her in the form of a beautiful infant, approached her, embraced her, kissed her on the forehead, wiped away her tears, and filled her heart with heavenly consolations. Once again, in the second hermitage, the same thing occurred to her: she forgot her cloak for the Holy Communion, and received a like reprimand and prohibition from her sister. This time she retired to her cell and gave vent to her sorrow in the presence of Jesus, her comforter. The Saviour again appeared to her clothed in priestly vestments and surrounded with a host of heavenly spirits, and gave her His own sacred Body under the sacramental species, and departed, leaving her overwhelmed with unspeakable joy.

CHAPTER V.

Foundation of a New Hermitage; Its Difficulties and Wants.

THE FAME of the hermitage of Damian, and especially the character of Johanna and Clare for sanctity, soon spread themselves abroad and won souls to the practice of virtue. The pious community numbered at this time eight persons; namely, Johanna, Clare, Andriola, Thomasia, Marina, Paula, Illuminata, and Agnes. The building was already too small even for themselves; much less could they accommodate new candidates for the religious life. Still they knew that such applicants should not be rejected, especially when they showed signs of having been called by God to the religious state. What, then, was to be done? Should the old hermitage be enlarged or a new one be built? And where were the means to be got for

either undertaking? And which of these two plans was the more practicable and the more pleasing to God? Such were the difficulties that at that time beset the Blessed Johanna, the Superioress of the place. But difficulties like these, which are more than sufficient to frighten worldly-minded persons, do not disturb the saints. Prayer and confidence in God stand for them in the place of all other resources. Johanna, in her perplexity, had recourse to that God who clothes the lilies of the field and feeds the birds of the air. She prayed herself and caused her religious to pray; and we can well imagine with what ardor the zealous Clare joined in these pious entreaties. Their prayers ascended to heaven; for, as Johanna was one day in prayer, God manifested His will to her in a vision. This was that she should build a new hermitage on the spot where she would see a large cross, and beneath it a numerous throng of virgins. She had not long to wait for the fulfilment of the divine promise; for she saw soon after a brilliant cross, all glittering with gems, which stood directly over the Hermitage of St. Catherine. This hermitage got its name from a small church near by, which was situated on a little hill outside the walls of the town but quite close to them, and which was dedicated to the glorious virgin and martyr of Alexandria. At the foot of the cross she saw, too, the band of virgins mentioned in the vision. Johanna concealed through humility and modesty the joy of her heart, as well as the twofold vision, and meekly told her religious and their confessor of her intention to obtain with God's help a site for a new hermitage near the above-mentioned church of St. Catherine. This new building, joined to the one already there, would give sufficient room for the accommodation of her religious, as well as of any others that might wish to join them in the service of God. Although she was completely without means for the carrying out of her plan, she had but little difficulty in persuading her sisters and their

confessor to give their consent; so great was the confidence they reposed in her, but especially in God's providence. Johanna, therefore, set about the work in the name of the Lord, and succeeded, through the beneficence of a pious man, in amassing a considerable sum of money. She bought the ground and commenced the building.

But alas for human weakness! The fairest works of piety have usually to suffer contradictions and difficulties. The saints must needs be persecuted; and with reference to the foundation of religious houses we have only to call to mind the case of St. Teresa. What calumnies and persecutions had not this great saint to undergo! The foundations of the new hermitage were scarcely laid in Montefalco when a storm of opposition arose. Some accused the Blessed Johanna of pride, as wishing to gain for herself a name as foundress of a religious Order. The more moderate considered her foolish. Others maligned her, saying that the desire for a more commodious habitation but ill accorded with the spirit of penance which she professed. Others condemned her on grounds of avaricious policy, saying that the religious would become in after-times a burden on the public for their support. Others still maintained that this multiplication of foundations was prejudicial to the character and growth of religious Orders, inasmuch as young persons would be attracted to them more through the love of novelty than the desire of leading a regular life. One person, in fact, had the hardihood to attack the very character of Blessed Johanna and her companions, making against them the most infamous accusations, so as to stir up the anger of the listeners. One of these latter grew so indignant that he would have laid violent hands on the malicious defamer, had not Johanna herself interposed and appeased his wrath by her charity and her prayers. In fine, the opposition to the project became so open and clamorous that it was deemed

advisable to call a public meeting to consider the matter. In this meeting the sentiment of the evil-minded and their deluded followers prevailed, and it was resolved to send a certain individual of the opposing party, named James, to Philip, Count of Gerra, who then ruled the duchy of Spoleto, to obtain from him the prohibition of the new foundation. The deputy departed on his mission, explained his case as well as he could, but to no purpose. The good count quickly understood the malignity of the opposing party and the insufficiency of the reasons which they alleged in defence of their course. In the mean time Johanna, who had entire confidence in God and was not annoyed by the plots of the evil-minded, paid careful attention to the advancement of the work she had begun; and her enemies, confounded and ashamed, began to grow less and less demonstrative in their opposition, their dupes recognized their error, and the friends of truth and goodness obtained a complete triumph.

The building was not yet finished, in fact was scarcely roofed, and consequently but ill defended against the bad weather, when these good religious took up their abode in it towards the year 1282. Amongst these Clare was first in point of merit, but last in her own estimation, as well as in point of age, as she was then but fourteen years old. Their first act on coming to their new abode was to give thanks to God, and their next to renew their resolution to serve Him and practise virtue with still greater courage, zeal, and perseverance than heretofore. They had not long to wait for an occasion to put their resolution in practice; for, if in the first house they suffered for lack of room and other inconveniences, in the second, which was still unfinished and consequently exposed to the weather, they had to suffer from the heat of summer and the cold of winter, as likewise from the lack of means of subsistence. Johanna felt more for others than for herself, and often proposed to

her religious the example of the Redeemer, who, for sake of us wretched sinners, was born in a manger, and endured cold and all sorts of privations, and who never feared the weather when there was question of saving souls. No other examples, no other eloquence, was necessary to make these holy virgins resigned, for they were already disposed to penance. St. Clare was remarkable beyond all others for her tranquillity of soul and her perfect resignation to the will of God, thus putting into practice the pious words of her sister. She made for herself a dress out of old rags neatly sewn together, and then, as though she were rich in worldly goods, she gave her ordinary dress and cloak to some Sisters who were of weaker constitution and more susceptible of cold, content herself to moderate the cold of the weather with the fire of her charity. Not content with giving away her clothes, she was likewise wont to share her own frugal meal with any Sister whom she deemed more in want than herself.

CHAPTER VI.

St. Clare is appointed to collect Alms for the Hermitage.

UP TO the year 1284, when our Saint was sixteen years old, the religious supported themselves, both in the old and new hermitages, partly by their own labors and partly by the aid received from their relatives. But in less than three years, and despite the opposition of worldlings, the little community had notably increased and now numbered twenty. The relatives of all these had not the means or the good disposition of the father of Johanna and Clare; on the other hand, it was hardly just that the maintenance of the good religious should fall altogether on a few. The consequence of this was that they soon felt

the want of means of subsistence. Johanna was troubled; still she did not wish to tempt God by asking Him to work miracles in their behalf. In these straits she had recourse to prayer as usual, but likewise took counsel with certain prudent religious persons, especially the prelate of the place. It was finally agreed upon that some of the Sisters should be deputed to collect alms in order to supply the pressing wants of the community. This was no easy matter at that time; for, independent of the labor necessarily attached thereto, it was rendered positively disagreeable by reason of the fact that the Mendicant Orders had been but recently established. The people, therefore, were not yet accustomed to the exercise of this charity; besides, they were anxious to support the Franciscans, who had recently established themselves at Montefalco. For these reasons Blessed Johanna hesitated upon whom she would impose this important charge. It seemed to be exactly suited for Clare; for the repulses, mortifications, and fatigue necessarily connected with this work were just what her soul longed for. One point alone seemed to be an obstacle; that was her great love for retirement, a virtue she had cherished from her tenderest years. Charity, however, rises beyond all other virtues, and knows how to preserve the spirit of retirement and recollection amidst the noise and tumult of the world, as was verified in the case of St. Clare. She presented herself before her sister and earnestly begged of her to assign to her the task of collecting alms. The Superioress met her with a refusal, either because she deemed her too young or unequal to the fatigue of the occupation, or else wished to try her constancy. Our Saint, thinking that this refusal came from too great a regard which her sister had for her, did not give up her idea, but explained the matter to her confessor, Father Mariano da Colfiorito. This latter approved of her intention, and took upon himself to make the bishop ac-

quainted with the case. He, too, gave her his approbation and blessed her good intentions. She consequently presented herself again before her sister, and begged more earnestly even than before to have this duty assigned her. Her request was finally granted, and Marina was appointed to accompany her. Immediately on obtaining her request she hastened to throw herself at the foot of the crucifix to thank her dear Lord for thus deeming her worthy to share, even in a slight degree, in His humiliations and sufferings; and was so inflamed with love in the fervor of her prayer that she remained for a long time in ecstasy.

The day appointed by the Superioress and long wished for by herself, on which she was to beg for bread for her dear Sisters, came at last. Clare wished before all to sanctify it by a devout preparation for her work; that is, by a fervent prayer to God for His blessing on her undertaking, and likewise that He would guard her against any violation of her early resolution never to look a person of the opposite sex in the face. She likewise begged of Him that He would make her experience those mortifications that she deemed herself deserving of on account of her sins. The Lord was so pleased with this prayer that He drew the Saint so powerfully to Him that she lost the use of her senses and fell into an ecstasy. Having made a like preparation each of the eight times that she afterwards went out for the next forty days, she experienced the like divine favors. On returning to her senses, Clare presented herself before the Superioress to ask her blessing; then, wrapping herself in her cloak so that she could neither see nor be seen, she went forth in the happiest mood. On the way she looked at nothing save the ground on which she walked; she scarcely looked at the doors at which she knocked. She was always anxious to get before her companion in order to be the first to receive the possible repulse, or else that she might have the trouble of carry-

ing all or the greater portion of the alms. In receiving charity it was her custom to kneel upon the ground, no matter how dusty or muddy it might be; she then kissed the gift, gave thanks to the Giver of all good things, and departed in silence, praying for her benefactors. There were not wanting persons who, instead of bread, gave her words of abuse; but Clare only rejoiced at this, excused the sin, and, when she came around again, exposed herself more willingly than before to like ill-treatment. In asking for alms, she always remained at the door, so that, of all the families which she visited both in the town and country, not one could say that the modest, holy maiden to whom they gave alms had entered beneath their roof.

One day as she and her companion were walking in the country, they were overtaken by a heavy shower of rain. Marina noticed some persons who were driving cattle running towards the porch of a neighboring villa to get under shelter. She therefore said to Clare: "Dear Sister, it would be well for us to quicken our pace, so as to get to that place of shelter." The Saint would not consent, saying that it did not become their holy profession to mingle with persons of the other sex, with whose character, besides, they were not acquainted. She thus preferred to have her clothes drenched with rain rather than have her serenity of mind disturbed or her soul exposed to the most remote risk of being stained. It may well be imagined what astonishment and edification her extraordinary modesty and angelic recollection caused amongst the people. As she walked along, her mind was ever intent on heavenly things, and this to such an extent that she often stood for a time as though absorbed in ecstasy. Her companion Marina noticed this and acquainted Johanna of it. The consequence was that the latter, partly to increase the humility and modesty of Clare, partly through fear lest anything should happen to her on the highway whilst in a

state of abstraction, forbade the Saint to go henceforth to collect alms, without assigning any reason for the prohibition. This action of the Superioress fell like a thunder-clap upon Clare, and put her in a state of consternation. But this was only momentary; for she soon remembered how valuable was the virtue of self-denial, and how great the merit of a joyful and blind obedience. She obeyed, and never again during her life set foot outside the convent walls. To supply, however, for this occasion of mortifying herself of which she had been deprived, she begged to be treated as a menial within the cloister; that is to say, she asked for the lowest occupations, such as sweeping, washing the dishes, helping in the kitchen or at the table, and such like. Being asked why she was so anxious to take upon herself the work of others, she answered that she did so that the good Sisters might have more time for prayer. Nevertheless the Saint was more contented and happy amidst the rigors of her penance and the fatigue and lowliness of her occupations than others are amidst the honors and pleasures of the world. She spent four years in this lowly state. But, it will be asked, will these spiritual enjoyments, these ecstasies and other divine favors described above, never come to an end? Or has not the spiritual life, too, its periods of darkness, temptation, danger, privation, abandonment? Such is indeed the case, as we shall shortly see exemplified in the life of Clare.

CHAPTER VII.

St. Clare is tried by Temptations.

T. CLARE had already run the half of her course; she was twenty years of age. She had spent her childhood and her youth in the strictest practice of virtue, in mortifications, and in the rigorous exercise of penance. But amidst all the rigor of her observance, amidst her disciplines and her hair-cloths, she always experienced the sweetest peace of soul. The yoke of her crucified Redeemer had been for her up to this both sweet and light, for the balsam of His love made her burden easy. The fragrance of the roses hindered her from feeling the punctures of the thorns; and her lower nature was so thoroughly subject to the higher that she seemed to be something more than human. But Clare was destined to undergo those trials which are more painful to devout souls than any martyrdom. These constitute the fire which cleanses the soul from every spot and stain, even as gold is made pure in the furnace. They are the school of humility, the highest test of virtue. And it is for those who are victorious in this contest that the fairest crowns of glory are reserved. Clare was not to be deprived of these rewards, for the opportunity of winning them was soon offered her. She was one day in her cell with her companion Marina, and they were conversing on heavenly things, when the discourse turned upon the goodness of her divine Spouse Jesus. "Oh, how merciful and loving and kind He is," said she, "that He gives us everything we ask for! He vouchsafes to grant me the grace to witness His entire passion every time I ask Him." "But," answered Marina, "I, too, ask for this grace, and beg God earnestly for it; but I know

I do not deserve to be heard, since I have not that lively faith which you have." Ah! how necessary it is to be mindful of the advice of the Holy Ghost, and be careful about praising a man whilst he is yet living! These few words of Marina penetrated to the heart of Clare and sufficed to awaken therein the faintest feeling of vanity, as though she were more favored of God than others. She afterwards confessed the fault with tears. It was a slight fault, indeed; but in the plans of divine Providence, Who knows how to draw good out of evil, it offered an excellent occasion for giving the enemy of her salvation greater power to tempt her, that her soul might thus be purified in the furnace of tribulation. And now every fierce temptation seemed as though it were unchained and let loose upon the Saint, like storms rising out of the infernal abyss, to disturb the sweet serenity of that soul which had been hitherto so calm. The clear vision of the passion of Jesus Christ was taken from her, and in its stead her fancy was filled with the foulest and most shameful images. She felt, what she had hitherto never experienced, that rebellion of her senses against the law of her mind which is the wretched heirloom descending from our first parents, and under which the Apostle Paul speaks of himself as groaning, and on whose account he longed to be freed from the body of this death. Instead of that heavenly light and undisturbed serenity of mind which she previously enjoyed, she found her soul overspread with such darkness that at best she could only grope along the paths of truth and justice; and she was often so bewildered by the violence of her senses and the dimness of her understanding that it was impossible for her to decide whether or not she had consented to the temptation. Her former peace was now changed into an intense desolation of spirit.

There was no scheme that her malignant tempter did not employ to overcome her constancy. After a thousand different assaults and insidious snares, he went so

far as to assume at one time the form of the Crucified One Himself. Under this false guise he spoke to her, and made every effort to insinuate himself into her heart along with the unchaste desires which he suggested to her. Not only did he tempt her to unholy actions and to complacency in the same, but he stirred up within her a storm of passions and a fierce enticement to their gratification, so that the wretched Clare saw herself surrounded, nay, overwhelmed, on every side. One temptation had scarcely passed away when another followed, even as wave follows wave on the storm-tossed sea. At one time she found herself on the dizzy heights of danger, at another in the awful depths of terror. An ice-cold fear made the blood at times freeze in her heart and veins, so that, amid the horrid darkness which enveloped her, she could scarce discern, by the dim light which God still caused to flicker before her mind, the spiritual pole which might guide her steps to Him. She often sought to unburden her weary heart to her confessor and other spiritual guides; conversed with them, disclosed to them her misfortunes, and accused herself as guilty of the most heinous sins. They sought in every way to calm her soul, assuring her that her fears were vain, and that where she apprehended sin she had only amassed merit; but Clare could with difficulty be persuaded of this, and her soul remained a stranger to every comfort. Believing herself guilty and exposed to the danger of still greater falls, she increased her bodily austeries that she might bring her flesh under subjection to the spirit and appease the anger of Heaven. It was not enough that her soul should be steeped in suffering; her body, too, must be lacerated by scourging and reduced by rigorous fasts. It mattered not that Blessed Johanna took from her the instruments of penance; Clare was too ingenious in devising other means for torturing her flesh. During the eleven years in which Clare was tossed about on this stormy sea of passion and tempta-

tion, she sighed and groaned day and night, raised her weary eyes to heaven, and in her desolation invoked the name of her beloved Bridegroom Jesus; but Jesus slept, as of old in the boat on the storm-tossed waters of Lake Genesareth, and seemed insensible to the sighs and tears of His beloved bride. Still, as He slept, His heart was watching to guard her from shipwreck, and in His own good time He rose from His slumber, commanded the winds and waves, and a great calm ensued.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Hermitage is erected into a Convent under the Rule of St. Augustine: Blessed Johanna is chosen Abbess, and dies soon afterwards.

ALTHOUGH the new building, begun by Blessed Johanna, did not reach completion till the year 1290, still the good Sisters did not desist from receiving other virgins into their pious retreat. Their place went on acquiring new credit and fame from day to day, till it soon attracted wide-spread attention. Amongst those whose attention was attracted to it there were some who believed that it would be beneficial to the regularity, stability, and growth of the establishment if it were erected into a monastery or convent, and they expressed their views to Johanna. She was convinced by their arguments and acquiesced in their opinion. Still, not wishing to act hastily in a matter of such importance, she discussed the affair with her religious, took counsel with wise persons, but above all prayed herself, and got others to pray, that the Lord might deign to make known to them His will. We know not in what language St. Clare offered up her prayers to God on this occasion; but we can scarcely doubt that the sorrowing and languid utterances which

came from her soul, all torn as it was by interior struggles, were more acceptable in the sight of Heaven than the most fervent prayers of her companions. After these preparations the community resolved unanimously to have the hermitage erected into a convent, and likewise decided to lay their resolution before the bishop of the diocese, Gerard Artesino, whom pastoral duties had just then called to Montefalco. Johanna spoke to the prelate in the name of her community, and humbly laid before him the unanimous desire of its members to become part of some approved religious body. But what Religious Order, what rule, was to be selected from amongst those approved of by the Church? Johanna and her religious, who in all their affairs had but one heart and one soul, were especially careful to make no choice of their own in a matter of such importance. For the distinctive feature of true virtue is humility, and true humility is ever distrustful of self, and relies more on the judgment of others, especially of those whom God has appointed to guide us. The petitioners therefore confessed their ignorance and inexperience, knowing well that God does not permit the humble and obedient to be led astray. Besides, they knew that any rule approved by the Church is a safe guide to heaven, and that sanctity did not depend on the shape or color of their habit. They therefore deemed it wiser to abandon themselves to the wisdom and discernment of their bishop. The latter had already a high opinion of their piety and virtue, but this instance of their filial reverence and submission won for them a still higher place in his esteem. Knowing then how reasonable was their request to serve under the banner of some approved Order in the Church, he had no hesitation in giving his consent. Neither did he hesitate long in selecting a rule for them. He quickly determined in favor of the Rule of St. Augustine, and this for many reasons. In the first place, it was recommended by the wisdom and sanctity of its author; then,

it was apostolic in its maxims, discreet in its precepts, and eminently suited to the weakness of the female sex; lastly, it had been embraced by many famous Religious Orders, as, for example, the Dominican, that of the Servites of Mary, and many others, both regular and military, to say nothing of the Hermits of St. Augustine, and the Canons of the same name, who were called later on the Canons of St. John Lateran. He accordingly promised to erect their house into a monastery, and to affiliate its inmates to the Order of the great Augustine, reserving to himself to give at his earliest convenience his legal approbation and the canonical institution. This he did by special decree of June 10, 1290.* By

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* We give here merely the introductory words of this decree: "Gerard, by the mercy of God Bishop of Spoleto, to his beloved daughters health and benediction in the Lord. Whilst approving of your praiseworthy conduct in the Lord, we have deemed it well to give you by virtue of this letter the Rule of St. Augustine," etc. I cite these words for the benefit of certain persons who might yet be led into an old error that St. Clare belonged to the Franciscan Order. It is indeed strange that Father Antony of Montefalco and other historians of that Order who followed in his footsteps should have fallen into this patent error. In the above-mentioned decree, which goes into the most minute details of conventual life, not even once is the slightest mention made either of St. Francis, St. Clare of Assisi, or the Franciscan Order. Add to this the fact that Berengarius, vicar-general of Spoleto, who presided over the introductory process for Clare's canonization and was the first to write her life, writes as follows two years after her death: "Since the venerable Sisters had received the wise Rule of St. Augustine," etc. Neither here, nor in the entire biography, nor in the introductory process, nor in the process held by papal authority, nor in the summary of her life, nor in the papal briefs issued concerning her at that time, do we find any mention made of our Saint as belonging to the Franciscan Order. On the contrary, in the petitions sent by the cities of Umbria to the same Berengarius asking him to advocate the cause in their name before the Holy See, Clare is explicitly called an Augustinian nun. Moreover, the Summary drawn up by papal orders begins as follows: "Concerning the life, conduct, and miracles of the Augustinian nun, Clare of Montefalco, of happy memory, Abbess of the Convent of

this decree he authorized them to receive novices, to have an oratory and a bell for divine service, and a cemetery for the choir and lay Sisters, and, still further, made them capable of enjoying all privileges granted or to be granted to the same Order. This foundation took place during the pontificate of Nicholas IV., at the time when Blessed Clement of Osimo was governing as General the widely spread Augustinian Order, and, in conjunction with Blessed Augustine Novellus, was enlarging, correcting, and bringing into one body the Constitutions of the same Order. Both these men were famous for their learning and sanctity during life, but still more so

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Holy Cross," etc. We read the same words in both the bulls issued ten years after her death by Pope John XXII. with reference to the process for her canonization. Urban VII. speaks as follows in granting the Mass and Office in the Saint's honor: "The Procurator-general of our beloved sons of the Order of Hermits of St. Augustine has exposed to us that on account of the great veneration which his brethren bear to Blessed Clare, a nun of the same Order," etc. As, notwithstanding all these proofs, various writers of the Franciscan Order endeavored to claim St. Clare, the consequence was that a dispute arose, and the following decision was given under Gregory XIII. by the Sacred Congregation of the Council: "As Blessed Clare was an Augustinian, her body shall be clothed in the habit of the Augustinian Order, and she herself shall be represented in all pictures and paintings in a garment similar in shape and color to that which is worn by Augustinian religious." The sole cause of this erroneous opinion seems to have been the fact that St. Clare is represented in an old picture as wearing a grayish habit. But who does not know what liberties painters have taken with reference to the color of the garments of their subjects? They have done this especially in the case of St. Augustine, and even in the case of St. Francis. Are the arguments, based on innumerable most authentic documents, to lose their force because of the groundless and well-known whims of careless painters? But if paintings be arguments, there are three pictures of St. Clare on the coffin in which her remains were placed in 1430, each of which represents her in the Augustinian habit. This erroneous opinion had its origin in the following circumstance. Donna Maria Manuel sent in 1577 a costly coffin in which to place the remains of Clare, and presented at the same time a handsome gray garment with a scapular.

after death by reason of the public veneration of their relics on the altars of the Church.

The next point for deliberation among the good Sisters was what name they should give their new convent. Johanna then made known to them the mysterious vision of the holy cross of which we made mention above, and proposed that they should call their house the convent of the Holy Cross. Her proposition met with unanimous approval. They then proceeded to the election of a new Superioress with a new title. Johanna was again elected and made Abbess of the new convent. This was as it should be; for the bishop held her in the highest esteem, and the new nuns loved her as a mother and looked upon her as their foundress. They knew that it was to her they were indebted for their existence as part of a Religious Order; they knew, too, what anxieties, contradictions, and labors she had undergone in securing their canonical foundation as well as in

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The Sisters at first refused the latter, remarking that the Saint's body should be clad in black. In order, however, not to offend their benefactress, they finally consented to put the gray garment over the black one that was already on the Saint. Finally the bishop, hearing of the matter, ordered the new garment to be removed. Then the dispute arose under Gregory XIII., until the Congregation of the Council gave the decision in favor of the Augustinian Order, which we quoted above. Wadding, the great annalist of the Minorites, writes as follows after examining the arguments of all the writers that preceded him in favor of St. Clare's being a Franciscan: "I confess that I can find no reliable authority on which to record St. Clare as having belonged to our Order. On the contrary, it is clear from the process for her canonization, from the summary of her life, from the bulls of Pope John XXII. which were issued within a few years from her death, from her life written by Berengarius, the vicar of Spoleto, two years after her death, and from many other documents, that she followed the Rule of St. Augustine," etc. Then, speaking of the habit, he says: "In uncertain matters I do not like to speak with certainty; but this I can with certainty affirm, that St. Clare belonged to the Augustinian Order." These arguments ought to be sufficient to settle this matter forever.

forming them to piety; they knew her zeal for souls, her ability in the management of business, her prudence, discretion, amiability; in one word, they knew her to be possessed of every quality requisite for a good Superioress, and so gave their unanimous assent to the bishop's wish that she should be their first Abbess. There remained for them now merely to make profession of those vows which turn the inconstancy of the human heart into stability and bind it firmly to God. The year of novitiate and trial had not yet been prescribed by the Church; on the other hand, these good religious had been already sufficiently tested in their vocation by the rigors of penance and other holy works. Nevertheless, they wished to spend some days in preparation for this solemn occasion. At last the happy day came on which they were to complete their sacrifice. On that day they solemnly promised to God, prostrate at the foot of His altar, to live henceforward until death in a state of poverty, not alone of spirit, but in effect; to preserve inviolate the lily of their virginity, by living with a chaste soul and a chaste body; and lastly, to subject themselves forever to the will of their superiors as to divine Providence itself. Each one may judge for himself how acceptable to God was this offering of so many and such spotless victims, sacrificed together on the same altar. A day so solemn was celebrated with general rejoicing, with hymns of praise, and the liveliest expressions of gratitude to the Most High. Our Saint felt keener satisfaction than any one else in this day's celebration. Johanna, too, rejoiced, but her joy was mingled with fear. She rejoiced at belonging to a regularly-established Order, but she feared for herself; and her experience as Superioress did not lessen her fears lest the observance of her community might not correspond to the weighty obligations of their newly acquired state. Nevertheless, she had to set an example of obedience and bend her neck to the new yoke. In order to lessen

in some degree the weight of her burden she portioned out, in accordance both with rule and custom, the subordinate duties amongst the most fitting Sisters, and entered, in the name of God, upon her new position in the thirty-ninth year of her age. But her administration was not to be of long duration, for she was destined to be soon called from the trials of life to the bosom of God. In the mean time she watched with the greatest care over the observance of the rule, and exercised unceasing vigilance in guiding her religious along the path which leads to spiritual perfection; and they, in their turn, vied with her in the observance of their rule, for the glory of God, and in order to cause no annoyance to their dear Mother and Superioress. The sweet peace which reigned in their convent and the mutual love which bound them all so closely together more than compensated for the privations they endured and for what they had renounced in the world. But the keenest source of pleasure for Johanna, and her greatest consolation, was to see beside her a sister who made such rapid strides towards sanctity and who was a pattern of every virtue for her companions. They were sisters by blood, but still more in spirit. Yet, if one were to judge from the manner in which Clare served and obeyed Johanna, they would have deemed her rather her servant than her sister. Johanna had now lived for twenty years as Superioress both in the hermitage and the convent; but her life was more like that of a subordinate or an equal than of a superior, for she never wore that air of coldness and reserve which is more calculated to repel hearts than to win them. On the contrary, she was most amiable and condescending in her demeanor, and always carried a joyful and smiling countenance. It is recorded of her that being one day advised by Clare to refrain from smiling, she answered: "This very night you will know why I smile." That very night, at the time of prayer, she called Clare to her side, and they both saw

lights of surpassing brightness and heard angelic melodies. Johanna then remarked, "this is why I smile." Later on the same divine favor was frequently accorded to St. Clare.

But the day had now arrived for Blessed Johanna on which God had predetermined to bring to a close her penances, vigils, cares, and troubles, and to call her to the sweet repose of a blissful eternity. That day was November 22, 1291, just a year from the time of her election as Abbess, and in the fortieth year of her age.* She died calmly in the arms of her beloved daughters, who vainly endeavored to suppress the expression of their grief at a loss so deplorable. But Clare was, beyond all others, inconsolable. For three continuous days she poured forth unceasingly tears of bitterest grief, so that the Sisters were astonished at her, for she seemed to them to have altogether lost her detachment from worldly things and her resignation to the will of God. They at length resolved to ask her why she wept so intensely. Clare replied amid sighs: "Alas! Sisters, it is not an earthly affection that causes me to weep. I have lost not merely a sister but a mistress, who instructed and guided me, with what charity you all know; and I have lost her, too, at a time when I have most need of her counsel and support." At this reply of Clare, the astonishment of her Sisters at seeing her weep was changed into astonishment at seeing so great humility in one who could well be a leading teacher in the spiritual life. But God intended to console her. Towards the end of the third day after Johanna's death, as Clare

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* Many writers have said that Blessed Johanna died in 1295. This, however, is in contradiction to the testimony of Sister Thomasia, a companion of Johanna, who spoke as follows when examined as witness in the process for Clare's canonization: "Johanna, the sister of Clare, died seventeen years before Clare herself." Now, Clare died in 1308; and if we subtract 17 from this we have 1291, the year of Johanna's death.

was absorbed in prayer after matins, she heard a step in the oratory which was exactly like that of her sister. She called her, and the answer came back, "Clare." At this word, Clare, greatly astonished, cried out, "My dear sister, are you then not dead?" "Yes," replied the other, "I am dead; but my death has been simply a transition to paradise, where I shall enjoy my God for ever." Clare heard the voice, but saw only a large flame, which finally approached and settled on her head. She then felt a holy calm suddenly take possession of her heart, and her sorrow was changed into joy and feelings of gratitude towards God. At the same moment God was likewise pleased to bestow upon her the gift of the discernment of spirits to an extraordinary degree, so that henceforth she was able to tell the goodness or wickedness of those with whom she came in contact. In this way did He recompense her for the trials she had so patiently borne during the third year of her spiritual struggle, and console her for the loss of her sister.

CHAPTER IX.

St. Clare is elected Abbess.

FTER the last sad honors had been paid to the venerated remains of the Blessed * Johanna, and the suffrages had been offered up for the repose of her soul, the good nuns bethought themselves of repairing their great loss. They

* If the title of "Blessed" be here given to Clare's sister, although she enjoys no public veneration on the altar, it is not that we wish to anticipate the judgment of the Holy See, but that we do not desire to depart from the method of speaking employed by historians in general, and especially by those of the Augustinian Order. Besides, in the process for Clare's canonization she is called a woman of wonderful sanctity, and we there read: "Johanna was a virgin who bore a great reputation for holiness."

accordingly sent word to the bishop of the death of their Abbess, requesting him at the same time to provide for the election of her successor. The bishop, who entertained a special affection for this convent on account of the discipline which flourished there, and also because he regarded himself as its founder, sent thither without delay his vicar-general. This latter, on his arrival, immediately began the election, having first invoked the light and aid of the Holy Ghost. He then questioned the nuns, one after the other, as to their choice, and found them unanimous in their opinion that Clare was best fitted of all for the position of Abbess by reason of her extraordinary virtues and other necessary qualities. There was only one difficulty in the way, and that was her age; for she had as yet reached only her twenty-third year, and there were many other religious in the convent much older than she. But wisdom is not measured by years, and the discipline of the Church did not require in those times, as it did afterwards, that persons in such positions should be at least forty years of age. Accordingly, this difficulty was overcome with ease, both on account of the great personal excellence and merit of the Saint, as well as of the ardent wishes of the entire community for her election. The vicar-general, therefore, concluded that Clare was not merely the choice of the religious, but that she was likewise the choice of God. They then proceeded to vote, and the votes were without exception in favor of Clare. She was accordingly, towards the end of the year 1291, declared by the bishop's deputy the canonically elected Abbess of the convent. When she heard her name proclaimed, Clare seemed as though she heard her sentence pronounced, as though she had received a fatal stroke. She fell on her knees at the feet of the vicar, wept profusely, and in a voice broken with sobs exposed, nay, in her humility exaggerated, her defects of age, talent, experience, conduct, charity; in a word, endeavored to prove

herself full of unfitness and sin. She said that the position suitable for her was that of servant and nothing more. She begged and begged to be relieved of the onerous charge, till finally the vicar-general, perhaps to calm her agitation, postponed her public installation in the office, and thus gave her a short period of repose. But, moved afterwards by the unanimity of the votes, the pressing instances of the religious, and above all by the extraordinary virtues of the Saint, he returned to the convent and duly installed her in the office, exhorting her to put all her confidence in God, and commanding her to remember the obedience which she professed. At the mention of the word *obedience* Clare was silent, and bowed her head with fear and humility. Whilst noticing the joy of others at her elevation, she only felt the more keenly her own interior sorrow, and was insensible to their congratulations, for these were like so many new wounds to her soul. She was in truth an object of pity.

He who has the heart all enlivened by divine love, and walks along smooth and level paths towards the goal of spiritual perfection, can, like David, run, even though he bears the burden of a kingdom; but Clare, who in those years was on the narrow path of purgation, a path all strewn with thorns and devoid of every sensible consolation, felt the entire weight of her burden. To discourage her still more, her fancy represented to her in the most lively colors the awful strictness with which God will judge those who are in authority, and then her own unfitness for the charge. Difficult indeed would it be to describe the gloomy thoughts and sad forebodings that coursed through her mind on that eventful day. Here, she said to herself, it will be necessary to admonish, there to entreat; at one time faults must be corrected, at another, overlooked; for this Sister a nod or an example is sufficient, another requires reasons, and a third, commands; severity will be useful at times, but in general kindness will be more efficacious; the faint-hearted have

need of encouragement; the vacillating, of counsel; the scrupulous, though rarely docile, need both; the melancholy will require consolation, and the sick must not be left uncared for and unassisted. In addition to all this, a large community must be supported with little or no means; and to do this, business matters must be attended to, and communication must be had with a multitude of persons of a great variety of character. In one word, the position of Superioress requires great skill, great prudence—in fact, every virtue; and Clare, in her humility, saw no such qualifications in herself. Notwithstanding all this, the will of God must be obeyed—through obedience she must begin to command. Listen, now, gentle reader, to a strange command! It was Friday, and the young Abbess was in the oratory with the Sisters, when suddenly she rose and threw herself on her knees before them. Just as Jesus Christ, before He took upon His shoulders the wood of the cross, was pleased to be beaten by those very men for whom He gave up His life; even so did Clare, who was the living copy of her crucified Lord, wish to be beaten, not, indeed, by the unbelieving and the ungrateful, but by her own beloved and faithful Sisters, before she took upon herself the cross of authority. She then begged her subjects to approach and punish, nay, strike, a sinner, an unworthy creature, such as she deemed herself to be. The religious, all astonished and confused, refrained, of course, from laying hands on their beloved and venerated Abbess. Clare renewed her entreaties, reminding them that it was Friday, the day on which the Son of God suffered for our salvation and to set us an example; but her entreaties were still unheeded. She at last exercised her authority, and gave them a formal command to do as she bade them. They, urged by obedience, finally stretched forth their hands against her innocent body, and Clare, as a criminal, received their strokes, lamenting that they were only too light and gentle. An example of such astounding hu-

mility, far from lowering her dignity or lessening her authority, acquired for her greater respect and efficiency, as the experience of the long years of her administration plainly proved.

CHAPTER X.

Brief Review of St. Clare's Conduct in the Government of her Convent.

T. CLARE had no need at the commencement of her *régime* to establish new ordinances for the preservation of order in her convent; for, aside from the fact that the just, such as these religious undoubtedly were, are a law unto themselves, they had before their eyes the wise rule of the great Augustine, the chief Doctor of the Church, and the father and founder of the Order to which they belonged. Besides, the Constitutions of the same Augustinian Order had been but recently compiled by the Blessed Clement of Osimo and Blessed Augustine Novellus, and the Sisters could easily gather from these the points suitable to their sex and state. In addition to all this, the Augustinian Order offered for their imitation numerous models of regular and perfect observance, whose fame was spread far and wide. Such were the two eminent masters of the religious life, Clement and Augustine, of whom I have previously made mention with praise; such, the great St. Nicholas of Tolentine; such, Blessed Philip of Piacenza, Blessed Antony of Patrizi, Blessed Gregory of Celli; such, the Blessed Christina of Menabobus, and many others, whom the Augustinian Order throughout the world and their own respective dioceses honor in the holy Sacrifice of the Mass and in their prayers. Blessed Angelo of Foligno was likewise contemporary with St. Clare. This venerable servant of God was known through-

out the entire surrounding country for his virtues, and six years before—that is, in 1285—he had quitted his native Foligno and the convent he had founded there in order to establish another in Montefalco, near the church of St. John the Baptist, where Clare had received her first spiritual favors. In enumerating the eminent religious of the Augustinian Order at that epoch, we should not omit the name of Blessed Egidius of Colonna,* who acquired such a wide-spread reputation for his extensive learning and extraordinary virtue. On this account it

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* Egidius of Colonna was born at Rome in 1247, and was descended from the noble family of the Colonnas. Gifted by nature with noble qualities, and brought up in piety and the fear of God by his parents, he spent his youth in great purity of morals. He often visited the Augustinian convent of S. Maria del Popolo, partly to venerate there the miraculous picture of the Madonna, partly to hold discourse with the zealous religious and be thus more and more strengthened to walk along the path of holiness. Notwithstanding the entreaties of his parents and the flatteries of his friends, who placed before him the enjoyments of the world, he entered the Augustinian Order under Clement of Osimo. After his profession he was sent to Paris to study theology in that world-renowned university. He had for teacher there St. Thomas of Aquin, who became much attached to him on account of his great talents and excellent virtues. Egidius, on his part, entertained the highest esteem for the Angelic Doctor, and undertook his defence against William of Lammare, when the latter attacked his teaching. Having received the doctorate, he was the first Augustinian to teach philosophy and theology at Paris. This he did with so much applause that he received the title of *Doctor Fundatissimus* (the most solid doctor), and the general chapter of his Order, held at Florence in 1287, decreed that his teaching should form the rule for the schools of the Order. He was preceptor to Philip the Fair, for whom he composed the work, in three books, entitled *De Regimine Principum* (Rome, 1482 and 1607; Venice, 1598). He became General of the Order in 1292, and was afterwards appointed Archbishop of Bourges and Primate of Aquitaine by Boniface VIII. He died at Avignon on December 22, 1316. He was a very voluminous writer, and followed for the most part his teacher St. Thomas in his theological views. Lanteri enumerates thirty works of his, chiefly on dogma, exegesis, canon law, and philosophy. (See *Kirchenlexikon von Wetzer und Welte*, II. Bd.; Häusle, Lanteri, and others.)

was sufficient for Clare to remind her religious of the spirit of the rule and statutes, and point to the living examples of faithful observance and genuine virtue. For it was genuine virtue that Clare loved; and she hated from her heart that false, apparent virtue which is wholly unproductive of good works, and which, in point of fact, is nothing less than hypocrisy, or vice itself dressed in the garments of virtue. In this she resembled the Redeemer Himself, who condemned the Pharisees for their hypocritical profession of virtue, and the Apostle St. John, who inveighed for a like reason against the sectarian followers of the heretic Nicholas. Clare was especially careful in guarding against the introduction of minor defects, for, as a little leaven corrupts the whole mass, so do these slight imperfections tarnish the brightness of virtue. In order to instil into her subjects the virtues suitable to their state, and obtain for them a strong foothold in their hearts, she brought her community together once a week in the chapter-room, and there, after the reading of some point of the Rule, she delivered to them a short but appropriate discourse, filled with the unction of her charity, and well calculated to make them enamored of the heavenly beauty of virtue and strict observance. She then, after hearing their faults, imposed penance, gave suitable advice, and closed the chapter with the prayers prescribed by the statutes. She gave no dispensation from the penances enjoined, for she was convinced that dispensations, like privileges in general, and too great conniving at faults on the part of superiors, pave the way for laxity. There never was a case in which she made exception in the enforcement of discipline on account of relationship, birth, age, or interest. She knew well that that exception of persons which so frequently begets odious rivalries and hatred amongst brethren found no place with God. For this reason she had regard to merit alone, not merely in imposing penances, awarding offices, and distributing fa-

vors; but of course she understood well how to make those exceptions which charity prescribes in favor of the sick or those hindered from the discharge of duty by any other reasonable cause. In her private admonitions she always attempered her language to circumstances and to the character of the party admonished, and strove with fine skill and admirable diplomacy to obtain an entrance into the heart, in order, on the one hand, to gain her point, and, on the other, to preserve unbroken that peace and love which should always subsist between subjects and superiors. Our Saint was a source of the greatest consolation to her religious by reason of the gift of counsel, which she possessed to a high degree. For, as she opened her heart to all, and drew all towards her by her amiable disposition, she was a constant refuge in every trouble. Those who were troubled in mind came to her for comfort and counsel; and they that were afflicted with spiritual dryness, and those who suffered from temptations or scruples, the weak-minded, the vacillating, the sick, all came to her, and all went away from her consoled.

By virtue of the same gift she understood the disposition of those who asked for the religious habit; and hence it happened that she accepted some and rejected others contrary to the opinion of her religious, who judged according to external appearances merely and were deceived. As regards the maintenance of the community, there were only two sources of revenue. One was the labor of the religious, and this was not of much account, for their rule required them to spend much time in spiritual exercises; and the other was the uncertain and scanty supply obtained from alms. But her spirit of poverty needed nothing more. Nay, even her frugality was such that she was often able to relieve the suffering poor without causing complaints among her own mortified religious. Their manual labor was performed in common, and a nun named Discreta super-

vised it, assigning to each religious her work in proportion to her strength and skill. At times they overcame the dulness and fatigue of their work by spiritual reading or pious conferences. Their clothes were kept in a common wardrobe, and their table was likewise common, with those exceptions only which necessity demanded. Their prayers were recited in common, and also the Divine office and the suffrages for the faithful departed; this latter being a devotion which the Saint especially loved to promote. They approached the sacraments together, and it was Clare's wish that they should approach them frequently; they observed silence, too, strictly and in common; in fact, all things were common amongst them, and the centre of this holy community was the ever-watchful heart of St. Clare. One thing which almost invariably injures this holy union of souls is intercourse with persons of the world and engagement in worldly matters. Clare was extremely careful in guarding against the evil consequences which flow from this source. To this end she guarded with the utmost vigilance both the grate and the door; and, although as yet the rule of monastic enclosure was not so strict as it afterwards became, she seldom gave permission to her religious to go to the grate in order to hold conversations with visitors. And when she did grant such permission to a nun, she always required her to wear her veil drawn over her face, and be attended by some companion who observed all that passed. She was careful, too, that persons of the world should not be introduced within the cloister unless accompanied by some of the older Sisters, and then each religious was obliged to retire to her cell. If, perchance, one or another had heard any news from without, it was not to be spoken of, lest it might cause distraction to those holy souls whose entire conversation should be with God. In a word, her vigilance extended to the smallest matters, for she was convinced that small matters lead to great, and that nothing which relates to

the service of God is really unimportant. She required strict observance of rule from others, but was herself the first to set the example of it; for she knew what force good example has, and that man, subject as he is to his senses, is more influenced by sensible facts than by the empty sound of words. Just as Jesus, the great Teacher of heavenly truth, first began to do and then to teach, even so Clare, who ever framed her conduct after that great Model, first practised herself what she advised or commanded. Nor did she fear that her dignity would be lowered by engaging in the meanest occupations, and by frequently acting as a servant, for in this she but copied the example of the Son of God, who descended from the bosom of His Father, not to be ministered unto, but to minister unto others, as He said Himself, and so confound human pride. But what we have said thus far is only an imperfect account of the great things done by our Saint for the glory of God, the sanctification of her own soul, the spiritual advancement of her religious, and the salvation of others, during the long period of her Superiorship, as will be clearly seen from the survey of her virtues which we are now about to make.

CHAPTER XI.

Progress of St. Clare in Virtue generally, but especially in the Theological Virtues.

MAN has only to pay attention to himself and to the experience of ages in order to see that his intellect has been indeed darkened by original sin, and that, in matters of religion and morality, he must grope along in darkness, always in danger of being lost in continual contradictions, unless he be guided by the unerring light of Heaven. This supernatural light is Faith, the first of all virtues, without which it is impossible to please God, and without

which, furthermore, all other virtues are but a mask that drops off on the slightest opposition. Facts prove only too conclusively in our own times that, in proportion as faith diminishes, good morals, too, fall away and disappear.

St. Clare, whose virtue was born of faith and nurtured on it, was well convinced of this, and her conviction was strengthened by the nascent heresy of the Beguins, which had begun to be preached in the neighboring town of Bevagna towards the year 1290 by a certain Ottonello. This man was afterwards convinced of the falsity of the doctrines he sought to propagate, and was converted to the truth by Blessed James of Bevagna, a distinguished ornament of the famous Dominican Order. These Beguins were heretics who strove by an affected virtue to corrupt the maxims of the Gospel, and by their odious excesses to give a fatal blow to virtue itself. One of these, of whom we shall have occasion to speak again, in order to gain proselytes to his diabolical party had the audacity to approach the Convent of the Holy Cross and tempt the Saint herself. But he found in her a heroine of the faith, who quickly discovered the impiety which he concealed beneath the mantle of hypocrisy, courageously opposed him, and sought to convert him to the true faith. But seeing that he remained insensible both to her arguments and entreaties, she succeeded in having him imprisoned in order to hinder him from spreading further the deadly poison of his corrupt teaching. This zeal of Clare for the purity of the faith will undoubtedly be censured and condemned by the disciples of so-called liberty and tolerance in our times. Those very persons, who would clap their hands in applause if they saw some poor, unfortunate wretch dragged to the galleys or the scaffold for some petty robbery, have nothing but sympathy and pity for the impious men who are guilty of high treason against the Majesty of God, for the propagators of irreligion and immorality, for the corrupters of society and

the enemies of the social order and of established governments. They have no toleration except for impiety, and to impiety of every description they are pleased to give the mild name of *opinion.* But St. Clare, though she had not studied philosophy, knew full well that facts, and especially such facts, are not mere opinions, and that he who tolerates them, or is indifferent to the downfall of religion and good morals, is no friend of God or of the state, and has neither charity nor any other virtue. There was another heretic of the same sect who was more led away by evil associations than bad at heart; with him our Saint was more successful, for she had the consolation of leading him back to the way of truth and justice. Thus, burning ever with the most ardent love for the purity of the faith, she endeavored to instil her own zeal into all with whom she came in contact; into those priests who made a specialty of preaching the Gospel, as well as into those who attended to the more humble needs of their flock, and into pious persons of every class. But in every case her object was to guard the flock of Christ from wolves in sheep's clothing, and to bring back the stray sheep to the one true fold.

Her sorrow was great at finding that so many had fallen into heresy, and, in consequence of these sad falls, she learned from experience not to place too great confidence in the virtue of her religious. She therefore recommended them to be always on their guard against the artifices of these carnal and sacrilegious teachers of a false spirituality. In fact, she suffered not to go uncorrected a single unguarded word that, even in the remotest degree, might tend to tarnish the purity of their faith.* And what efforts had she not to make in

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* She was wont to say to the Sisters: "My beloved children, be firm and immovable in the holy Catholic faith, and remember ever that you are daughters of the old true Church which was founded by God, purified and embellished by the Blood of Jesus Christ, and enriched and guided by the Holy Ghost. Lend not your ears to the

order to guard her own faith and hinder herself from falling from that exalted heroism of which we have just seen her give proof! We must not forget in what a wretched state the Saint found herself at this time. Her conflict with the enemies of her salvation still raged fiercely; temptations against every virtue still assailed her, but especially temptations against faith, which is the foundation of all other virtues, and which the devil for that reason made special efforts to weaken and destroy. He spread darkness over her intellect, suggested doubts, proposed reasons against the dogmas of the Church, even sent his agents to the door of her holy retreat, so that at any cost he might make her his prey. But, as the Apostle says, virtue is perfected in infirmity and temptation. Clare, therefore, far from yielding to the assaults of the infernal enemy, rather caused her faith to take still deeper root, and burned with so ardent a desire of sealing it with her very heart's blood, that she bore a holy envy towards the many millions of martyrs who had the happiness of testifying to it amidst tortures and death.

But faith is very imperfect without the hope of one day possessing that Sovereign Good in which we believe. Such faith is in fact the faith of those who despair. Now it was precisely this holy virtue of hope that formed the support of the Saint amidst the many temptations she had to undergo, as well against her faith as against every other virtue, during her long and trying warfare.

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damnable innovations that are preached by the servants of Satan, and which send so many souls to eternal ruin." She took the greatest precaution that none of her religious should speak at the grate with those who were in the least suspected of heresy; and when on one occasion a man of this character had the boldness to approach the convent-gate, she said to him with determined air and curt language: "Enter not into this place, but leave these holy walls instantly, and never dare to come hither again. I shall pray the Lord God that He may cure your blindness." Such was Clare's zeal for our holy faith. (From the *Analecta juris pontificii.*)

When her infernal enemies threatened to drive her from the path of righteousness, she clung with tenacity to the strong anchor of hope and defied them, even as some gigantic rock with deep foundation defies the wildest fury of the surging billows. Supported solely by her confidence in God, she would gladly have buried herself, like so many others before her, in the most frightful and inhospitable of deserts, in order to be freed from the dangers of her position and of the world, but chiefly to attend to the contemplation of heavenly things and give herself over to the extreme rigors of penance. So much was she engrossed with these thoughts that at times the expression of them inadvertently escaped her lips. Her Sisters regarded these expressions as the passionate outpourings of a soul filled to overflowing with the love of God, and remarked to her that only lions, tigers, and serpents dwelt in these vast deserts. Clare replied: "Those who trust in God have nothing in this world to be afraid of, and can live amidst such monsters with as much tranquillity as amongst religious." For the same reason she was never troubled to-day about the wants of her community on the morrow; nay, it sometimes happened that, seeing the wants of the poor to be greater than those of her own religious, she caused all the provisions of the community to be distributed amongst them. When some of the nuns complained of this, she censured them as lacking confidence in God's goodness, saying that if God feeds the birds of the air He is much more careful in providing for the wants of man, who is made to His image and likeness and reposes his confidence in Him. It happened one day that the Sisters who were out collecting alms returned without anything. The hour for eating came, and the nuns found themselves at table without anything to eat. Hereupon the Saint, without wavering in the least in her heroic confidence, turned her eyes towards God and begged of Him to give them food at the fitting time, to open the hand of His provi-

dence and fill even their bodies with the gifts of His bounty. A moment after, Sisters Illuminata and Marina entered the refectory, bearing in their hands a basket filled with the whitest bread, which they had found in the oratory—an undoubted miracle of divine Providence in their behalf. On another occasion Clare was censured by her brother, Father Francis, for not being more careful in strengthening the walls which surrounded the convent for the greater security of her religious. Although she was poor in the goods of this world, and consequently unable to meet such expense, she was rich in her confidence in God's goodness. She therefore replied to her brother with all humility and trust, that her community was safer under the protection of the Lord than if it were surrounded by the strongest fortifications. Her confidence was not in vain; for, though the town itself and the surrounding country were not wanting in evil-minded persons, neither she nor her religious ever suffered any mishap. But of her lively faith and firm hope we shall find abundant proof in the remaining portion of her life, as well as in the numerous miracles worked through her intercession during life and after death.

It was thus St. Clare believed and hoped in God; not with that dead faith or presumptuous hope which have no connection with charity, and by which the sinner is only too often misled; but she believed with that faith which worketh through charity unto good, and she hoped with that energetic hope which runs along the path of merit to the possession of that highest good, the sovereign God Himself. Yes, charity, which is the animating principle and the fulfilment of every virtue, every perfection, and all sanctity, gave life to all the other virtues of the Saint, and accompanied in an extraordinary degree all the acts of her life. She had consecrated herself entirely to God from the first dawning of reason, and made the resolution to love none other than Him; towards Him she directed by an irrevocable vow her

every thought and her every affection; and, as she grew in years and virtues, she sighed day and night for Him whom alone she loved, and esteemed herself and everything else that was not of God as of no account. In short, her life was one continual act of love; she longed for the mysterious kiss of peace, for union with the august object of her fondest affections, and her soul was impatient to be freed from the shackles of the body that it might hasten its flight to the bosom of the Uncreated Good. Nevertheless, the sensible experience of her love did not correspond to her ardent desires, especially during the years of her internal warfare, in which her love glowed indeed, but insensibly, as a fire that is covered with ashes. She was pained at not feeling within herself the burning love of the greatest saints, nay, even of the Seraphim themselves. And when she buried herself in the contemplation of God's unspeakable loveliness, and saw the immense disproportion between her love and His merit, she accused herself of coldness, and looked upon herself as the most ungrateful of His creatures. She therefore employed every means in her power to kindle in her heart the flame of divine love, and she begged of God day and night, amid sighs and tears, to infuse this purifying love of Himself into her soul. Frequently during the day, as we have already remarked, she adored her Lord on bended knees; and, remembering the words of the Royal Prophet, that the fire of divine love burns most brightly in contemplation, she made this holy exercise her constant occupation. On the departure of the religious from the oratory after complin, she was wont to remain there that she might commune in solitude with her God and meditate on heavenly things. So absorbed would she become in her meditations that she seemed oblivious of herself and all earthly objects, and sometimes forgot even her sleep and meals. It was not unusual for her to prolong her vigils to the morning, and then, after reciting matins, return

to her meditation until the hour of terce. In addition to all this, she practised many other devotions in the retirement of her cell, and was accustomed, even in her temporal occupations, to raise her heart frequently to God. She had, furthermore, set apart certain privileged days throughout the year on which she devoted herself completely to meditation. On those days she begged the Sisters to leave her entirely to herself, and in nowise disturb her with temporal matters unless they were of the most pressing necessity, in order, as she said, that she might do some good for her soul. These days were the principal feasts of Our Lord and of the Blessed Virgin; the two feasts of the Holy Cross; the feasts of the Apostles, of Holy Father Augustine, of the holy virgin and martyr St. Catharine, patroness of the neighboring church; of St. Agnes and St. Margaret; of St. Francis, her special protector; and of St. Clare, whose name she bore. Not only did she fast on the vigils of these feasts, but she spent the night in watching and the entire day in prayer,—and in such fervent prayer that she often fell into a state of ecstasy. The imagination cannot picture to itself the soaring flight of her entranced spirit at these happy times.

The dearest and most familiar subject of her meditations was the passion of Jesus Christ. Here it was that she learned to purify still more her already pure affections. With reference to this matter it is worth mentioning that, when the Saint was but fourteen years old, a pious woman named Agnes of Gubbio, who led a solitary life in Monteluco, near Spoleto, came to visit Johanna in Montefalco. In the pious conversation that ensued Agnes said: "Happy he who, when he eats, sees in the dish before him the wounds of Jesus, and when he drinks, sees in the cup His sacred Heart; happy the soul that looks at the transitory things of the world with the eyes of Jesus, and is nourished with the sacred body of its Redeemer." Clare heard these words, and they sank

deeply into her heart, so that she quickly resolved to make them her own by putting them into execution. Her practice, instead of falling short of her resolution, soon exceeded it, so that she scarcely saw a single object that did not bring to her mind some mystery of the passion. Whenever she sat down to table her mind reverted to these pious thoughts; in the act of eating she remembered the wounds of her Saviour, when she drank she thought of His loving Heart; and these mental images were accompanied by affections of which those only are capable who transform themselves into the object of their compassion. At times she even broke out into pious ejaculations that were interrupted by her sighs and tears. When she became aware of this she blushed; consequently, when she was a subject, she either kept her eyes veiled, or strove to distract herself by serving at table. As these remedies did not suffice, Blessed Johanna was obliged to forbid her to appear any more at table with the other religious. She obeyed; and when she was made Abbess she observed the same custom by the advice of her confessor, either going to table when the others had finished, or else leaving the refectory when she found she could not control her feelings. In reward for her great devotion to His passion, her heavenly Bridegroom frequently made her taste on her food the bitterness of gall and wormwood, or else feel in some portion of her body a part of His sufferings. But as these things could not satisfy a heart which was all sympathy, all love, for her crucified Redeemer, she joined to them her voluntary pains, her vigils, fasts, and mortifications of every kind. Because her mind was deeply impressed with these meditations and accustomed to them, in her conversations with the Sisters she frequently spoke of the passion of Christ, and recommended them to meditate often upon His sufferings and those of His blessed Mother. And that they might accustom themselves to the remembrance of these subjects, she advised

them to place themselves often in postures similar to those assumed by the Saviour during His passion. Neither were her religious the only persons to whom she recommended this devotion. She gave a like advice to all with whom she came in contact; and when she saw any one in trouble she was wont to say: "Look upon the cross of Jesus, and your trouble will be less difficult to bear." As she considered that sin alone was the cause of the sufferings of her Beloved One, she conceived for it the greatest horror, and frequently said: "I would rather endure every conceivable torture, would rather be torn in pieces, than offend my loving God by a single venial sin!" She shed abundant tears when she reflected on the insults offered to the Divine Majesty by sinners, and the injury done to the fold of Christ by the spread of heresy; and she was grieved beyond measure when she saw what little zeal even the faithful manifested for the honor and glory of God. Her most ardent wish was to oppose a barrier to the inroads made on faith and piety, and to replace the coldness of indifference with the warmth of divine love. As regards her religious, her zeal was without bounds, for she was never weary in her efforts to excite them to the love of God. Nor were her efforts fruitless; for in the ranks of her spiritual daughters many striking models of the highest virtue were to be seen. In her deep earnestness to promote the holy cause of divine charity in the hearts of others, the Saint had no difficulty in finding motives to propose to them. It is thus she reminded them of the inestimable blessings of creation, preservation, God's watchful care, and, turn by turn, of all the immense blessings of divine grace, finishing with the eternal glory of Heaven. But it is needless to occupy ourselves longer with this subject; for all that has been thus far written concerning the Saint, and all that remains to be said of her, is neither more nor less than the record of her love for God.

CHAPTER XII.

St. Clare's Love of her Neighbor.

WE have already remarked that St. Clare had formed the resolution to love nothing else but God; and yet she loved creatures too, and loved them as much as others loved them; but the love she bore them was in nowise opposed to that which she had promised to God. Rational creatures are made to God's image and called to the possession of His eternal kingdom; wherefore He declares that what is done even for the least of these He will consider as done unto Himself. He wishes to be Himself loved in man, and therefore proclaims the great law which is the abridgment of Christian morality; namely, that we love our neighbor as ourselves. And who is our neighbor if our fellow-man be not such? Taught in this school of charity, St. Clare loved her neighbor in order to love her God; and she loved him, not with that sensual, interested, natural love so common in the world, and which in the end amounts to nothing more than the love of self and of one's passions, but with that generous and noble love which the Gospel inculcates. She possessed no property, she was poor, and her community lived by the labors of their hands and by alms; yet in her poverty she bestowed more alms upon God's poor than very many rich people in the world. For these, owing to avarice, or sinful lavishness, or intemperance, or vain display, or amusements, or the indulgence of different passions, have nothing left wherewith to help the suffering members of Jesus Christ and purchase Heaven for themselves. But our Saint not only gave of what was superfluous, but her charity went still farther and made her give even what was necessary for herself and

her community. She used to say that it was perfectly conformable to the order of charity that one who is poor should deprive himself of what he has in order to give it to one that is poorer. In accordance with this heroic maxim she gave strict orders that no poor person should ever be allowed to leave the convent-door without receiving help if help was in the house. Her pious command was literally fulfilled by the Sisters. This extraordinary liberality of the Saint often left her religious family without food, and the nuns were not seldom constrained to content themselves with herbs for their meals, or else await some new exhibition of divine care. This circumstance, however, far from exciting distrust or discontent amongst these mortified religious, served only to convince them still more of God's infinite bounty; so that Clare had the double satisfaction of relieving the wants of the poor and witnessing the self-denial and resignation of her Sisters. But though alms were daily distributed at her convent, she was anxious that they should be distributed more generously on the great feasts, being firmly convinced that there was no better way of honoring these days than by works of charity. She was likewise accustomed to distribute twelve loaves of bread among as many poor persons, in honor of the twelve Apostles, whenever bread was baked in the convent.

Another excellent work of charity is to clothe the naked; and this, too, was an object of Clare's solicitude. If at any time her relatives or other benefactors sent her cloth or garments for her own personal use, she either placed them in the common wardrobe for the use of the house, or else distributed them amongst those who were in need of them, being content herself with a single garment, and that always of the worst. Two poor women of Montefalco, named Beatrice and Clare, were frequently clothed and helped in other ways by our Saint. Not to speak of the many other objects of her charity, she once took her cloak from off her own shoulders

and sent it to a man who had been just released from prison, and who, as she was told, was hiding half-naked in a corner of the neighboring church. Neither was her charity of that kind which waits until the poor and the hungry and the naked come to expose their wants and ask for relief amid shame and confusion. She herself went around in search of the needy and unfortunate, made inquiries concerning them, and secretly sent them timely relief.

The alms that are given with purity of intention and in the true spirit of charity have the power of making gifts return in abundance into the lap of the giver. This truth was verified to a singular degree in the case of St. Clare; for considerable donations were often sent her by rich people in the world and by cardinals and prelates. Of these she used by far the smallest portion for the needs of her own convent, and sent the remainder to other pious houses and to persons in the town who were more needy than herself. But her charity was not content with this. She oftentimes addressed herself to God in the sweetest and most touching terms of complaint concerning the wants of His creatures. Her tender heart suffered much when it witnessed human misery, and divine Providence was often pleased to pay attention to her lamentations and send the needed help. The Lord loves the cheerful giver, say the Holy Scriptures; and Clare was ever cheerful in the bestowal of her charity. It was when a great multitude of poor persons surrounded her that one could really see how dear to her was the exercise of this holy virtue. In such cases she was never heard to complain either of the number of the needy or of her own poverty. If she had but little to give, she first pleased God by her desire to give more, and then compensated for the smallness of the gift by the cheerful manner in which she gave it and the words of hope and consolation with which she accompanied it. It was easy for her to feel pleasure in giving and to administer com-

fort, for the joyfulness of her countenance plainly showed that she experienced more pleasure in distributing alms than the poor did in receiving them.

The sick, too, were a special object of her sympathy. She herself suffered much from sickness; but whenever she could be out of bed she seemed forgetful of her own infirmities that she might attend to those of others. She was in all truth the Mother of her religious; less, however, by her authority than by her kind and delicate attention. In works of charity she was the servant of all, but more especially of the sick and infirm. That tender, motherly love with which her heart was filled shone forth in her mild countenance, and showed itself in the words of comfort which she spoke and in the sighs which escaped her when she witnessed the sorrows of others. So keenly did she feel the miseries of others that she became sick through very sympathy; but that self-same sympathy imparted to her strength and energy to serve them in their wants and relieve their distress, for it made her see in the persons of the wretched the image of her suffering Saviour. She never waited till the Sisters themselves complained of being sick, but as soon as she noticed in any one the least symptom of illness she came to her, advised her to go to bed, made the bed for her with her own hand, saw that the physician was instantly summoned, and rendered her every assistance that lay in her power. She then waited with constancy by her bedside, and could scarcely be persuaded to leave it; she administered her medicine to her, sympathized with her, comforted her with sweet and tender words, and encouraged her to patience by reminding her of the passion of Jesus Christ and the example of the Saints, as well as of the greatness of the reward which God has in store for those who bear their sufferings patiently. In the excess of her charity she would have willingly taken upon herself the disease that she might thereby relieve the sick person. No matter how humble or revolting the services required by

the sick were, the saint was only delighted to render them, and she performed all with the utmost attention and exactness. When she was forced by sickness to remain in bed herself, she did not on that account neglect others who were sick, but made continual inquiries about them, provided for their wants by anticipation, and sent them by messengers words of encouragement and consolation. During a long and painful illness which Sister Illuminata lay under, our Saint had an excellent opportunity of exercising her great charity; for, in addition to the unwearied attention which she paid the sick Sister, she oftentimes caught her up in her arms to help her to move, as her disease required. And when Illuminata, astonished at the condescension of the Abbess, said to her that such an occupation was not in keeping with her high position, the Saint replied with tenderness that it was eminently fitting that mothers should carry their children. Another Sister, by name Vannola, was stricken with a worse and more offensive disease. The Sisters that waited on her found the greatest difficulty in remaining near her on account of the nausea caused them by the corrupt matter which she was continually spitting up. But Clare, notwithstanding that her stomach was very weak, found in her charity strength sufficient to enable her to overcome all repugnance and wait on the sick Sister, giving her every attention, and sitting at her bedside to administer words of consolation.

But Clare's charity was too great to be confined within the limits of the cloister. To give an instance or two. She had heard that a poor but respectable girl of the neighborhood, by name Fioruccia, had been severely beaten by some dissolute young men, so that her face was all disfigured. On hearing this the Saint was so moved that she determined to do what she could for the poor girl, and immediately despatched two lay Sisters to see her, giving them orders to render her every assistance in their power, and to entreat her for the love of God to

pardon those who had injured her, and to tell her to give herself no trouble about other matters. She then took upon herself the care of providing her with food and the necessary remedies for her injuries. Her actions far surpassed her promises, so that as soon as the sick girl was able to walk she betook herself to the convent in order to thank her distinguished benefactress. The Saint herself went to the door, and at the sight of the poor girl who had been so badly injured and disfigured she could not restrain her emotion, but kissed her wounded hands over and over again; then, addressing herself to God, she cried out: "O Lord, if it be pleasing to Thee, take these wounds from this poor girl, and give them to me who have deserved them so much more." She then turned to Fioruccia and said: "Have patience, my daughter, and give thanks to God, who has restored you your health and preserved your virtue intact; trust in Him, and He will ever be to you a kind Father and will give you a rich reward in paradise."

Again, a woman named Clare of Cavallara was covered with a most disgusting leprosy, a disease not uncommon in European countries in those times, having been brought thither from the East by the returning Crusaders. This unfortunate could find no one to approach or relieve her till she met Clare. She took upon herself the care of this poor creature, and supplied her with food and other necessaries. She invited her to come and see her every day at the convent-gate. There, on bended knees, the Saint carried with her own hands the food to the mouth of the leprous woman, and encouraged her to patience with the most consoling words. Many other women, who were afflicted with the same terrible disease, found help and consolation in the tender heart, the ready hand, and the heroic charity of St. Clare.

Those who suffered from other misfortunes besides sickness were likewise the object of Clare's charity. Thus on one occasion an unfortunate maiden of Monte-

falco came to the Saint, as to the common consoler of the afflicted, to explain to her the sad plight in which her father and her entire family were placed. The vice-governor of the duchy, having been bribed with money, had unjustly condemned this girl's father to pay a fine of a thousand lire, and had, moreover, ordered him and his entire family to go into exile from out the territory. At the recital of this misfortune which plunged a whole family into misery the Saint was deeply moved, and promised the unhappy girl to do what she could in the matter, recommending her in the mean time to put her trust in God and not to lose courage. When the girl had gone away the Saint threw herself at the foot of the crucifix and prayed, with that strong faith to which nothing is refused, that her dear Lord would deign to look with eyes of pity on that wretched family. She then wrote in their favor to Cardinal Orsini, the legate of the province, and requested him to issue an order for a review of the case, at the same time exposing with clearness the grounds on which she based her request. Her petition was granted; a new trial was ordered, and the innocence of the injured party clearly established. The sentence was accordingly revoked, and succeeded by one more just; namely, the deposition from office of the unworthy judge.

But if St. Clare interested herself so much in the maladies of the body and other misfortunes of this life, which, after all, are but passing trials, what must have been her ardor in providing for the spiritual wants and infirmities of her neighbor, in rescuing souls from those dire torments that shall never have an end? To bring back souls from vice to virtue, from the state of sin to the state of grace, is the noblest work of charity. It was for this that the Son of God came upon earth and endured the most frightful tortures, nay, even the death of the cross; it was for this that the first preachers of the Gospel exposed themselves to every peril and gave up

their lives amidst the most excruciating agony; for this, too, Clare burned with a holy zeal, and would have willingly given up her life in the sacred cause. It was a source of the deepest grief to her that her sex and state hindered her from going forth in public and preaching to sinners the gospel of repentance; but her charity sought out other means, not unsuited to her state and well calculated to gain the proposed end.

On hearing of any scandal she had immediate recourse to the pastor, or to preachers, or to other pious persons, and entreated them to employ every means in their power for the amendment of the person concerned. But the exhortations which she gave at the grating of the convent were even more effective in preventing sin; for they were prepared in the spirit of prayer, animated by the sweet and powerful eloquence of her charity, and wonderfully strengthened by the just reputation she bore for sanctity. But her prayers were the most powerful means which she employed to this end. She implored the mercy of God in sighs and tears, conjured Him, importuned Him. Knowing that the conversion of some sinners is as difficult a work as the raising of Lazarus from the dead, for which the Saviour Himself prayed, she, too, sighed and groaned, and added her prayers to her tears, and united to both the prayers of her religious, till she at length obtained her request. It was exactly by virtue of these prayers that St. Clare obtained the conversion of a certain judge who was at that time living in Montefalco, and who was sunk in the depths of vice, being utterly oblivious both of God and eternity. So powerful was the effect of her prayers in the case of this man, that not only did he renounce his evil ways, but he bade farewell to the world and took the religious habit in the Order of St. Francis to do penance for his sins. The same was done by a certain Corraduccio, brother of Sister Frances of Foligno, one of the Saint's companions. This man led a wicked and scandalous life, and his sister

was greatly grieved thereat. Knowing the great sanctity of her Abbess, she begged her to recommend him to the Lord that He might enlighten him and move his heart. This was sufficient to move St. Clare to have recourse to prayer, for the interests of an immortal soul were at stake. The first result of her prayer was that Corraduccio, through a stroke of divine mercy, had such a severe attack of sickness that the physicians entirely despaired of his recovery. When his sister Frances heard of his illness, she sent him two pomegranates from a tree which St. Clare had planted with her own hand, and told him to be of good heart, for he would be soon cured through the prayers of the Saint, but reminded him to be sure and come see the Abbess as soon as he was able. He finally obtained health both of soul and body, and came to see his sister and St. Clare. The latter was especially rejoiced in seeing the change worked in him, and gave thanks to God for this additional proof of His great mercy. She infused by her earnest words such a love of virtue into the heart of the converted youth, that he immediately entered into the Order of Friars Minor to do penance for his sins. Another brother of Sister Frances, by name Rudolph, who was addicted to gambling, and was likewise proud and irritable, abandoned the path of vice as soon as St. Clare prayed for him at his sister's request. We read, likewise, of a wicked youth of Spoleto who was converted by the prayers and admonitions of the Saint and entered a religious Order. But the following fact will show with still greater clearness the strength and energy of that love for the salvation of souls with which the Saint was animated. There came one day to the grating of the convent a man who was deeply sunk in sin and vice, and who, in a conversation with Clare, discovered to her the deplorable state of his soul. He added, however, that it was not his intention to change his life at present, but only after some years; still he wished to recommend himself to her pious

prayers. When the Saint heard this strange and obstinate declaration she was deeply moved, and brought all her eloquence, nay, even her tears, to bear upon him, that she might render his heart susceptible of Divine grace and turn him to God. But the man's heart was hardened, and it could not be softened by her entreaties. The man departed, and Clare threw herself at the foot of the crucifix and told her Lord, amid sighs and tears, that she desired the speedy conversion of that unhappy man at any cost. Although she felt herself driven, as by an unseen power, from the place of prayer, she still persevered in imploring the divine mercy. She again felt the same mysterious force impelling her to desist from prayer, as though it were vain to pray for one abandoned by God. But Clare was determined to overcome by a holy violence the angered justice of God. She accordingly prayed, in order to appease the divine wrath, that the Lord would be pleased to visit upon her the punishments which that sinner's crimes deserved, but that He would at the same time touch his heart and grant him the grace of conversion. The Lord could not refuse to accept this heroic sacrifice, and the Saint gained a complete triumph in winning that obstinate soul to virtue and grace.

The Saint's charity not only reconciled individuals to one another and to God, it even settled the disputes of provinces. The inhabitants of Trevi and those of Montefalco were greatly excited over some question of territory, and resolved to settle the dispute by an appeal to arms. Some women seeing these ominous preparations hastened to acquaint the Saint and recommend themselves and their families to her powerful prayers. She needed no other inducement. She instantly assembled her religious in the oratory and commenced to pray; and she persevered in prayer with her religious till the welcome news arrived that the contending parties had been reconciled without bloodshed and the armed forces had

retired. On another occasion some troops from Rieti found themselves besieged in the castle of Arrone by the combined forces of the Perugians and the inhabitants of Spoleto, and reduced to such straits that they gave themselves up for lost. St. Clare was informed of their misfortune, and hastened to their relief with her charity and her prayers. Her intercession was not in vain; for peace was soon re-established without further damage. The city of Arezzo, too, experienced the powerful influence of her intercession with God. The Saint heard that this city, in which Cardinal Orsini, legate of Umbria, was residing, had been besieged by an army of Florentines. This news was sufficient to make her have recourse in supplication to the God of armies, and beg, with that confidence which had never been misplaced, that He would take pity on His distressed servants. The immediate consequence of her prayers was the miraculous retirement of the besieging force. Nor were private persons less influenced at that time by feelings of hatred and revenge; but Montefalco had the good fortune to possess just then a powerful and earnest intercessor, through whose means deadly hate was often extinguished and bitter enmity stilled. In short, Clare was all to all, and would have imitated the Apostle gladly by becoming anathema out of love for her brethren. Such is the charity of the saints.

CHAPTER XIII.

St. Clare's Love of her Enemies.

THE proud philosophy of the world has endeavored to convince mankind with specious arguments that it is right to pardon one's enemies; but it was reserved for the humble wisdom taught by the God-Man to prove this by convincing reasons, namely, the argument of example. But

Christianity goes further, and commands us not merely to forgive our enemies, but to love them; to do good to them that hate, calumniate, and persecute us. Clare, who read no other book than that of the crucifix, had a larger practical knowledge of duty than could be obtained from the barren theories of philosophers. It is the height of folly to expect to overcome a blind and furious passion like revenge, especially when it is nourished and sustained by self-interest, jealousy, anger, pride, and a false idea of honor, unless one is furnished with the arms of Christian charity and divine grace. This is still truer when there is question not merely of forgiving, but even of treating with love and kindness, him who is plotting our ruin. From what has been said already we can form some idea of the heroic charity of Clare, and what we have yet to say will serve to set this virtue of the Saint in still clearer light. In her great charity she might well cry out with the Apostle, that neither perils, nor persecution, nor the sword could ever separate her from that invincible love which is in Christ Jesus. In point of fact, a soul which had so earnestly resolved to reproduce faithfully in itself the image of its crucified Lord, the most persecuted of all the children of men; a soul which had borne for long years with unconquered patience, and was even yet bearing the fierce fire of interior persecution, the awful assaults made upon it by the powers of darkness—such a soul could not be so cowardly as to give way to the feeble annoyances caused by men or by the passing trials of life. It must, on the contrary, have been strong enough to love those for whom its heavenly Bridegroom prayed, suffered, and died. Our divine Redeemer was not content with suffering and dying that He might attract all hearts unto Himself; He was not content with traversing Judea from one end to the other during the latter years of His life, healing the sick and doing good to all; nor were His followers, the Saints, content with like manifestations of benevolence,

and especially our Saint, who longed, moreover, to imitate her Redeemer in forgiving and loving her enemies. Let us give one or two proofs of what we say. But, unfortunately, we live in a time when we must either keep the truth in the background and pass over facts in silence, or else expose to the scoffs and sneers of the world the choicest portion of the flock of Jesus Christ. If convincing proof of Clare's sanctity be adduced, the world will say, but always in the singular number, "Clare was a holy religious." But if a single religious of either sex happen to commit a fault, the logic of the world changes, and, instead of fastening the blame on the individual, they draw a general inference from a particular case, and wickedly say, "See, such are monks and nuns." The Apostle Judas betrayed his divine Master, and it would be equally valid logic to point to the remaining eleven and say, "See, such are the Apostles." We must expect to find even in the cloister, to a greater or less degree, the weaknesses of human nature. God allows unworthy persons at times to find ingress into religious communities that others may be exercised in the practice of virtue. The life of St. Clare gives proof of this.

A certain religious, who in changing his dress had not changed his evil ways, conceived so decided a dislike for the nuns of the Holy Cross convent that he came one day to their house, urged on by his evil impulse, and gave vent to his hatred of them in the coarsest language. St. Clare, ever firm in her evangelical mildness, calmly endeavored to disabuse him of the unfavorable opinion he had formed of her religious family, and to recall him to the ways of Christian charity. But on this occasion she had no success in calming his fury; on the contrary, she was compelled to listen to still more infamous calumnies, which he afterwards spread around in the neighborhood. The Saint was deeply pained at finding the character of her good religious thus assailed, but she was grieved still more by the sin of the malicious calumni-

ator. But, on the other hand, she rejoiced at the opportunity afforded her of imitating her divine Redeemer by pardoning her enemy and thus making Him some return for His extraordinary love. It happened shortly after that this man fell sick, and Clare returned good for evil by preparing food for him with her own hand and making frequent inquiries concerning him.

There was, likewise, a nun, belonging to a convent in Montefalco which no longer exists, who strove to bring the Saint and her religious into bad repute. This she did, either through jealousy of the high character enjoyed by Clare and her nuns, or through envy of the abundant alms which they received. Here, too, the charity of Clare shone forth in the brightest colors; for her only thought was to revenge herself on this unfortunate religious by showing her still greater kindness and affection. She sent alms frequently to the convent in which her slanderer lived, and moved others to do the same. It was still further noticed that, when she received any considerable donation, her first act was to set apart the greater portion of it for that same convent. She adopted this means of conveying salutary instruction to her rival.

Some time before this, about the first year in which she held office, our Saint had to undergo another and still more undeserved persecution. The daughter of a certain physician of Montefalco had been received into her convent, and was there at this time under the name of Sister Catherine. Her two brothers, Pucciarello and Thomas, had not given their consent to her entrance into the convent, and were consequently greatly angered with St. Clare. Their anger was very unreasonable, for nothing should be more free than the choice of a state of life. Every opposition, therefore, made to one in a matter of this kind is an evident injustice, which is all the more flagrant when the state chosen is so exalted as that of a religious. But the wicked know no reasons save those

of the passion which sways them. These two brothers formed a plot with some other youths as reckless as themselves, went to the convent, scaled the walls, and entered by force into that asylum of piety, tranquillity, and silence. Their entrance threw the good religious into a state of consternation, which was heightened by their sacrilegious conduct and blasphemous language, and by their savage threats to burn down the convent and put the inmates to death. As lambs pursued by wolves gather round the shepherd, even so did these holy virgins run to the side of Clare, their Mother, and tremblingly implore the protection of Heaven. The Saint, strong in her confidence in God, alone remained unmoved, and encouraged the others by her heroic example and her inspiriting words. "Fear not men," said she, "for Almighty God is watching over us and guarding us." She then appeared before the intruders, and her presence immediately overawed them, and they retired without doing further damage. When the report of the outrage had spread abroad, many persons of the town urged the Saint to institute legal proceedings against the guilty parties; but it was to no purpose. Clare's principles were quite other than those of revenge; her maxims were to pardon her enemies, to pray for her persecutors, and to do good to those that did her evil. She entered no complaint against these misguided young men, but recommended them to the Lord with all the fervor of her charity, and never ceased to pray for them as long as they lived, nor even after their death, as we shall see later on. The leading object of her solicitude was the salvation of their souls, but her charity extended even to the health of their bodies; for, during the illness both of Thomas and Pucciarello, the instigators of the sacrilegious outrage, she prepared many delicacies for them with her own hand, and had them conveyed to them by a reliable member of her community, Sister Hildebranda. Some time after, a certain Stephen, a notary public in

Montefalco, acquired a like unenviable notoriety by his unjust persecution of the Saint and her convent. This man had in his possession some important documents belonging to the convent of the Holy Cross, and the nuns being in need of them asked him several times to give them up. He, intent on some evil design, constantly put them off. At length, emboldened by the very mildness of the religious, he not merely refused the papers, but passed to insolence and insult, and went so far as to declare that he would persecute them as long as he lived. He said that he would enter a charge before Pope Boniface VII. against Clare of being friendly towards the Colonnas, who were at that time the determined opponents of the Pope. The Saint was not in the least disturbed by these threats, because, conscious of her innocence, she knew she might rely on the protection of Almighty God. The culpable blindness of the wretched man pained her more than any injury he could do either herself or her community. She accordingly, as she was wont to do in such cases, determined to pray for him that God might give him the grace of repentance and pardon him. Whilst she was in prayer the Lord revealed to her that this Stephen was likewise a forger, and that his crimes would soon be discovered and he would be condemned. The prediction was speedily fulfilled, for he was shortly after accused of forgery, convicted, and sentenced to lose his hand. But could St. Clare, who, like the Apostle, was all to all, and who seemed to give the preference in her affections to her enemies, allow one of these to meet with so great misfortune without striving to avert it? As she had nothing to hope for from men, she had recourse to God herself, and made her Sisters likewise pray. To the great astonishment of every one, word came shortly after that the guilty man had been pardoned; a circumstance which could be attributed to nothing else save to the efficacious prayers of Clare, who had interceded for him

so earnestly with the sovereign Lord of human hearts and human destinies. These are a few of the many instances of Clare's extraordinary charity; and he who is not moved by them must be something less than human. It is in this way that the holy followers of Jesus Christ conquer their enemies.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Cardinal Virtues of St. Clare.

THE EDIFICE of Christian perfection is supported by four pillars, which are the four cardinal virtues; and these virtues have but one foundation, which is charity. Such is the teaching of the great Augustine and the other Fathers of the Church. In point of fact, prudence is nothing more than the industry with which charity selects those things that are exactly calculated to foment and nourish it, and rejects the contrary. Justice is the right government of charity itself, which gives to God and man, who are its objects, whatever is due them. Fortitude is nothing else than the strength of charity in enduring every evil rather than be separated from God, its sovereign end. Lastly, temperance is the moderator of those pleasures which aspire to a dominion over charity, or, in other words, it is charity itself guarding the integrity of its rights. He, then, who has not charity can have only imperfect virtues, which are not worthy of eternal life. He cannot have the cardinal virtues, for these, as we have seen, spring from charity as from their source; nor can he have any others, because all others are subordinate to the four cardinal virtues. On the contrary, he who has this fertile principle of all virtue, charity, has all the other virtues in proportion. We have already seen in the three preceding chapters, in fact in all the preceding, how great was the charity of St. Clare; and we shall see from what

follows that the remainder of her life was one continuous act of generous love which was ever growing in intensity. It therefore follows that she must have been rich in all the other virtues, both the cardinal virtues and those that depend on them.

We showed in a preceding chapter what admirable prudence she displayed in the government of her religious family, noticing the skill with which she guided her religious along the path of virtue, maintained peace among them, and nurtured in their hearts a love for penance, prayer, and regular observance, so that her little convent was like a mystic garden in which every virtue bloomed. We observed still further how the same virtue shone forth in her conduct amidst the many trials she had to undergo, and especially during the eleven years of her struggle with temptation, as well as in her dealings with the hypocritical heretics of the time. We need not wonder that her prudence was so great when we reflect that God, in reward for her great charity, was pleased to bestow on her those precious gifts of the Holy Ghost, wisdom, counsel, and understanding, as we shall see later on. By her foresight, her diligence, her docility to advice, her circumspection, her extreme caution and solicitude, she showed how deeply prudence, which is the necessary accompaniment of every virtue, had struck its roots into her heart.

Her justice was in nowise inferior to her prudence. For how could the heroic love of St. Clare both for God and her neighbor be reconciled with even the faintest shadow of injustice towards one or the other? Could she love God as ardently as she did and at the same time refuse to Him the love, gratitude, and adoration to which He is so justly entitled? Could she love her neighbor in the manner we have described and at the same time be guilty of violating his rights in any way whatsoever? We would deem it an injury to that character for sanctity, which Clare acquired from her tenderest years and

maintained to her latest breath, if we endeavored to prove at greater length her deep and ever-abiding sense of justice. Suffice it to say that her sense of this obligation was so keen that she entirely forgot herself and consecrated every faculty of her soul and body, every instant of her life, to the fulfilment of the duties which she owed to God and her neighbor. It was her sense of justice that made her observe so minutely the precepts of the Gospel and of the Church, the ordinances of her Rule, and the commands of her superiors; it was it that made her prompt and blind in her obedience; it was it that made her a model of gentleness, affability, liberality, and friendliness; and it was it that made her act contrary to the inclinations of her heart in punishing with rigor all violations of rule in her subjects, though the spirit of penance and self-denial made her doubly rigorous in punishing any faults she noticed in herself.

The third cardinal virtue, which is fortitude, was equally conspicuous in the conduct of the Saint. This is a virtue which the world highly prizes—an inference that may be drawn from the fact that the ancient Romans named it the virtue by excellence, *virtus*, as though it alone were worthy of man. Fortitude is the support of justice and of every other virtue; it combats for them, defends them, endures every evil, hunger, thirst, calumnies, persecutions, nay, even sacrifices life itself, rather than abandon the path of righteousness. We have already seen this virtue manifested by Clare in her long and patient combat with the powers of darkness, in the magnanimity with which she pardoned her enemies, and in the extraordinary kindness which she showed to those very persons who were impiously conspiring against herself and her beloved religious. Nevertheless, it will not be out of place if we adduce one or two other instances of the Saint's heroic fortitude. Evil-minded persons often spoke of herself and her religious as being idle, restless, and hypocritical, and succeeded by this means in bringing

their character into discredit and injuring them in the estimation of some of their benefactors to the extent of materially diminishing their revenue. Clare, however, was not at all annoyed at this; on the contrary, she was just as joyful and contented in these adverse circumstances as she had previously been when Divine Goodness favored her with prosperity. But God, who thus allowed His servant to suffer, was likewise careful to reward her. He bestowed upon her interior consolation, and likewise gave her, especially in the latter years of her life, many sensible proofs of His protection. Her sanctity soon succeeded in scattering the clouds of calumny and obtained for her abundant alms. Of these she made a holy use, as we have already remarked, for she bestowed the greater portion of them on the needy. Nevertheless, even in this her calumniators found material for their false reports. Clare was of a very delicate constitution, and frequently suffered from ill-health. On this account her relatives and friends sent her from time to time various little delicacies. Although the Saint almost invariably distributed these to others, nevertheless malevolent persons took advantage of the fact that she received them and spread abroad the report that she was gluttonous. When these persons met any one belonging to the convent they mockingly inquired, "What delicacies did your Saint have for meals to-day?" These calumnies reached Clare's ears, and one of the nuns suggested to her that it would be well, for the sake of her own reputation and the holy habit she wore, to put a stop to these malicious reports by showing the charitable use made of what was given her. But Clare paid no heed to the suggestion. In her greatness of soul she followed the example of Jesus Christ and opened not her mouth, preferring to become, like Him, "the reproach of men and the outcast of the people." She bore all her infirmities, and they were many and severe, with that patience and resignation which befitted a spouse of the

Crucified. On one occasion when her nuns, pitying her sad state, counselled her to pray for her health, she made answer: "Far be it from me to pray for health! I glory in my infirmities; for the soul gains strength in proportion as the body grows weak; besides, my sins merit still greater punishment." Our Saint displayed the same invincible courage on the trying occasion of the death of her parents. Her father, Damian, died whilst Johanna, his other daughter, was still living and engaged in founding the second hermitage, a work to which he materially contributed. Giacoma, their mother, took the religious habit in the convent of the Holy Cross after her husband's death, and died there at a time when Clare was most in need of her help. Vanillo, her cousin, likewise died in Rome at the very time when he was engaged in transacting affairs of the highest importance to the convent. These losses might well be expected to have disturbed the calmness of Clare's soul. But no; she never lost her peace of mind, for her lively faith taught her that death had been decreed by God as the penalty of sin. She knew, further, that God's ways are always just, and that He gives life and death in accordance with His wise plans, demanding ever from His creatures patience and submission. In short, she was the valiant woman spoken of in the Book of Proverbs whose fame reached even unto the farthest bounds of earth.

It remains for us now to speak only of the last of the cardinal virtues, temperance. But, after the enumeration of her rigorous penances, her scourgings and haircloths, her fasting, silence, and retirement, in fact, her universal self-abnegation, it would be superfluous to inquire further concerning the greatness and excellence of the Saint's temperance. We wish, however, to make one remark with reference to this matter. Temperance, when joined to the rigors of penance, may appear cold and repulsive; but in the saints, and especially in our Saint, it presents quite a different appearance. True

temperance, such as Clare's was, is as mild and indulgent towards others as it is severe with self. Gentleness, humility, modesty, and clemency invariably accompany it; and such were the qualities that distinguished this virtue in Clare, and shone forth in her language, her countenance, and her whole conduct. To sum up, she possessed all the cardinal virtues in a high degree because she possessed charity in a high degree.

CHAPTER XV.

The Life of Penance led by St. Clare.

THE VIRTUE of penance is as much esteemed by the saints as it is abhorred by the world. In fact, the holy ones of God have been at all times distinguished for this virtue. Thus, the prophets of the Old Law led a most austere life; and the Precursor John, the last of them, practised all the rigors of penance amidst the solitude of the desert. The great Consummator of the old and new dispensations, the incarnate Son of God, did penance for our sins; and His Apostles and disciples, and after them all the saints, not even excepting those who never lost their baptismal innocence, practised the same virtue. St. Clare was no exception to this rule; for not only did she practise penance, but she practised it in all its rigor. She was prompted to this by three motives. In the first place, she wished to check the rebellion of the senses and bring them under subjection to reason and faith; secondly, she wished to punish in herself every fault, however slight, because to the pure eye of her sanctity there was no stain, no fault, that appeared slight; and lastly, she wished to imitate the Man of Sorrows, Jesus, who suffered so much for her and for the world's redemption. It excites astonishment and seems at first sight incredible that a delicate virgin, who was subject to such fre-

quent attacks of sickness, could bear the burden of such austerity. We have already remarked that from her childhood she had formed the resolution to observe a perpetual abstinence from every kind of meat. This resolution she kept throughout her life with the exception of great feasts, when she ate a little to satisfy her religious, and in times of sickness, when she ate it through obedience both to her physician and her confessor. Her bread was of barley or rye, or a mixture of both; and she took with it as a relish some wild apples, vine-leaves, or raw herbs according to the season. On this coarse vegetable food she lived the entire day; and if at times she took beans, whether dry or steeped in water, she regarded them as a luxury, and by consequence superfluous. She had charged her brother, Father Francis, with providing these herbs and wild apples for her, and he, not knowing the purpose for which she intended them, was not very particular as to whether the herbs were insipid or the apples bitter; but this exactly suited the penitential spirit of the Saint. Sister Illuminata, too, discharged the same office whenever she went out. But she, understanding matters better, brought her garden-vegetables and more select fruit. This displeased Clare; and she consequently begged the Sister to bring her the herbs of the field and either wild apples or those that had fallen from the orchard-trees. She abstained from wine altogether. But as she advanced in years, she suffered greatly from her stomach, and was obliged to use wine and cooked food by order of her physician. In obedience to this command, she was wont on Sundays to fill with wine a wooden vessel which contained about a pint; she then diluted it with water, so that it lasted her the whole week. As regards the cooked food, it consisted of soup made from vegetables or herbs, without seasoning and generally without salt, and not seldom mixed with cold water, so as to make it entirely unalatable. But this in her estimation was not fasting.

As regards this precept, her invariable rule was to eat only once a day; and on certain important days she tasted no food at all. It would be difficult to enumerate the many days on which she fasted throughout the year. Besides observing the fasts commanded by holy Church, and the fast of Advent proper to the Order of St. Augustine, from All-Souls' Day to Christmas, she likewise fasted on all the Fridays and Saturdays of the year; on the vigils of all the feasts of Our Lady; on those of both feasts of the Holy Cross, of holy Father Augustine, St. Catherine of Alexandria, St. Francis of Assisi, and many other saints. In a word, the greater portion of the year was for her a continual fast.

As regards her clothing, although the rule of St. Augustine permits the use of shoes, she never wore them, but, in her eagerness to suffer, went barefoot the whole year, except when forbidden to do so by her physician. She wore neither linen nor hempen garments, being content with a single habit of coarse woollen stuff. In winter she wore beneath her habit a garment woven from horse-hair, which in those times was called a *pelengolo;* and in summer a coarse hair-shirt, the inside of which was thickly lined with rough bristles.

Her bed consisted of two naked boards. Yet it was seldom that she lay even on this; for her sleep, always sparing and broken, was usually taken on the bare pavement, either kneeling or sitting with her head leaning against the wall, or resting on a block of wood of the shape of a cross which she kept in her cell. It was only in severe attacks of sickness that she slept, by order of her physician, on a straw-mattress, with a coarse quilt for covering. Such were the sensible comforts of Clare's life.

But her spirit of penance was displayed still more in the bloody discipline with which she was wont to torture her innocent flesh. The bundle of nettles which she sometimes used was nothing in comparison to the

knotty cords with which she scourged herself every night even unto blood. It was her wont to increase this punishment on stated days or in proportion to her zeal. Her religious were astonished and afflicted at her frightful austerities, the effects of which she could not altogether conceal, and feared that by them she would shorten her days. They consequently begged her with tears and entreaties that she would moderate them, and preserve herself for the service of God and the good of the convent. The Saint made answer to their request: "My dear Sisters, your advice and your tears show that you bear towards me a love of which I am wholly unworthy. Allow me to weep over my miseries and sins, and know that, notwithstanding all my penance, I have not yet learned to subdue my senses. If you have not strength to do what I do, at least do what you can that you may keep yourselves pure in the eyes of God. For the rest, I know that my body deserves no better treatment; if I could, I would gladly feed it with straw." The religious were mistaken in thinking that Clare's austerities injured her health; for as soon as she recovered from her sickness and resumed her penance, she looked as strong and healthy as though she had been using the best of food. As she was out walking one day, she met a maiden of Montefalco, named Bernardola di Moricone, and said to her: "Would you like to enter our convent?" Bernardola made answer: "I would not think of such a thing, for I could never live on herbs as you do." Thereupon Clare remarked: "You see, nevertheless, that I am fatter and have a healthier color than you." It may be, as some would have it, that God preserved her health by a miracle; but it is nevertheless true, and facts prove it, that mortification, though severe, is not injurious to health and does not tend to shorten man's life. To be convinced of this it is sufficient to cast a glance at the great age attained by the ancient Fathers of the desert and by innumerable other saints,

all of whom were remarkable for the austerity of their lives. The very Order to which the Saint belonged furnishes us with two examples of this, both contemporaries of the Saint and living in the same climate. The one, St. Nicholas of Tolentine, who was a very martyr of penance, reached a good old age; and the other, Blessed Gregory of Verucchio, who was likewise distinguished for his austerities, reached the extraordinary age of 118 years—an age seldom or never attained by those who lead a life of luxury and indulgence. But the world does not and will not understand the wisdom of the saints. In order not to cause inconvenience to the flesh it either renounces the joys of heaven which are acquired by penance, or else practises very slight mortifications, being content with a small degree of glory.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Zeal of St. Clare in the Observance of her Monastic Vows.

CHRISTIAN penance, of which we have just been speaking, may be practised in many and various ways; but its noblest and most meritorious exercise consists in the observance of evangelical poverty, virginal continence, and religious obedience. Other penitential works serve, it is true, to expiate the punishment due to sin, and often act as preservatives of the virtues just mentioned; but it is the three vows that tear up every evil passion by the roots, remove every obstacle to salvation, and lead man straightway to the goal of Christian perfection. It is certain that every passion, every vice, may be finally reduced to pride, covetousness, or sensuality; but it is equally certain that obedience, poverty, and chastity give the death-blow to these three capital passions which are the fruitful source of so many evils. It is in this that the perfec-

tion of the evangelical counsels consists; it is to this end that all the holy founders of Religious Orders have ever looked; and what has been thus far said is more than sufficient to convince us that St. Clare kept the same point steadily in view. It is useless to remind our readers of what we said before concerning her obedience to her parents as a child in her father's house, for this is something trivial compared with the heroic degree in which she afterwards practised this virtue. We would remind them, however, of what we have said about her obedience, when at the age of six years she entered into the hermitage of her sister Johanna, and began to understand what religious obedience meant. She spent sixteen years in the two hermitages without either vows or rule, so that obedience had not as yet such great claims upon her as it afterwards had; nevertheless, such was her obedience during all that time that it would have been very difficult to find even a professed religious, who, after long years of practice in the ways of monastic perfection, could equal her in the merit of this virtue. From her very childhood she put herself completely under her sister's guidance and did nothing of her own will. As proof of this we have already mentioned how Blessed Johanna called her at times to prayer and bade her not to rise until she sent her word; and how the holy child remained there immovable the whole day because her sister did not send her word to rise; and how neither youthful vivacity, nor fatigue, nor hunger, nor the advice of her companions, nor the thought that her sister had forgotten her could move her to rise, because the thought of obedience overruled all other thoughts in her mind. She burned with love for Jesus Christ in the holy Sacrament of the Altar, but her delicate obedience would not permit her to ask admission to that heavenly banquet. As we mentioned before, she was told on a sudden to approach the holy table: prompt obedience was her preparation. The Holy Communion was denied her: her obedience

made her retire without a murmur. We have likewise told how eager she was for the laborious and humiliating task of collecting alms, partly to spare the other Sisters, partly to mortify herself. This was the only occasion that she was known to persist in seeking a favor; but no sooner was this forbidden her than she submitted without a remonstrance, though much grieved at losing so excellent an occasion of mortifying herself and increasing her merit. She meditated unceasingly on the holy law of God, and received in reward special graces and lights; but the more favors she received the greater was her humility. Hence it was that she was ever distrustful of herself and always sought security in obedience. To obedience she subjected her will in the performance of her work, and her intellect by deferring always to the judgment of others. Her demeanor towards the community was that of a servant; but she acted so not from fear or any other worldly motive, but in the spirit of pure obedience and with sincere joy. She always preferred the outwardly expressed voice of God to those inner voices and inspirations concerning which it is at times difficult to decide whether or not they come from God. In the voice of her superior she always recognized the voice of God; and her love for Him made her all eagerness to execute the commands of lawful authority. On the first intimation of the will of her superiors she spared no pains in obeying as perfectly as she could, for she knew that blind and prompt obedience is doubly pleasing to God. Now, if her obedience was such in her early years, ere yet she was bound by vow, it would be useless to inquire what it was after she took upon herself that solemn obligation. One year, however, was all that remained for her in which to give proof to her superior of her increased zeal in the observance of that obedience to which she was now bound by vow. She had to cease to be a subject that she might become superior; but she did it through obedience, and commenced to command by

obeying. Though superior herself, there were others whom she was bound to obey, and towards whom she could practise that submission which was so dear to her. This she did with eagerness; for, if she obeyed so readily the commands of her confessor and her physician in matters so repugnant to her spirit of penance, we may well imagine how much greater must have been her submission to those authorities which her rule commanded her to obey.

As regards her poverty, a brief inventory of her worldly goods will best show how well she observed it. She had in her cell a cross, two bare boards, and a chair; and on the boards, which served both as a bed and a table, she kept a wooden pitcher, some barley-bread, and a few wild herbs. This was all the furniture possessed by the Abbess of the convent. But it was all she desired to possess, for when she had more she gave it away to the poor. She was poor herself and wished, too, that her convent should be poor. To preserve this spirit of poverty she at first persuaded, afterwards commanded, her religious to distribute to the poor whatever remained over and above their wants for the day. This command was scrupulously obeyed without the slightest consideration of the want which its fulfilment at times occasioned among themselves. On one occasion, when there was no bread in the convent, the Saint, to supply its place, gathered up every little scrap of flour she could find and made therefrom with her own hand some cakes. These on being tasted were found so delicious that the Sisters had no hesitation in ascribing the fact to the direct intervention of divine Providence. She never asked for money for her convent; and when the fame of her sanctity attracted to her retreat high dignitaries of the Church and prominent persons of the world, she refused to accept the donations which they offered after conversing with her, through fear, as she said, lest it might appear that she set a price on her spiritual conversations. In this way

she banished even the shadow of suspicion of self-interest. Her unselfishness and spirit of poverty were likewise noticeable in her manner of acting in the admission to probation of candidates for the religious habit. On such occasions she paid no attention either to the poverty or riches of the postulants, but looked solely to their merit and vocation. The nuns at one time presented to her a rich lady of the town and begged that she be admitted to the religious habit. Amongst other reasons, they alleged that through her the convent would receive help and protection. The Saint, after reflecting for some time, made answer: "This good maiden will be received; but the reliance you place on her parents for help will soon be disappointed. Of this I am glad, that you may learn the folly of earthly hopes." There was a country maiden, named Bizzola, who frequently requested Sister Illuminata to help her to gain admission into their convent. The Sister, learning that she was very poor, thought she could hold out no hope to her. At the moment that she gave this answer to the poor girl St. Clare happened to be engaged in prayer. She had a vision, in which she saw a mysterious vine transplanted into her convent; but she understood not its meaning till she afterwards heard of this ill-advised rejection of the girl by Illuminata. She applied the remedy on the spot, had the girl brought to her, and clothed her with the religious habit under the name of Sister Catherine. In this way the Saint repressed both in herself and in others that love for temporal goods which exercises such a powerful sway over men. Poverty was dearer to her than all the riches this world could bestow.

It remains for us to speak of the wonderful triumphs won by our Saint over the third passion, sensuality. It was in this point that Clare showed the most extreme delicacy, and carried her precautions, if such were possible, to excess. The rule of holy Father Augustine reminds religious women that they are not forbidden to look at

men, but that sin consists in indulging in unholy glances and impure desires. But St. Clare, who had formed the resolution from her very childhood never to look a man in the face, remained faithful unto her latest breath to this difficult and heroic determination. She herself was on two occasions forced to make this admission ;* and Father Severinus, one of her confessors, gave testimony after her death that she accused herself at one time of having raised her eyes too high during the consecration, at the elevation of the Sacred Host, and of having thus accidentally seen the face of a man who was passing in front of the choir-grating. The rigid guardians of her eyes were her angelic modesty, the thick veil which she wore half-way down her face, and the cloth with which the grating for visitors to speak through was always covered. In addition to these, we may mention the extraordinary mortifications with which she visited her tender and innocent flesh, and which effectually extinguished every inordinate movement of the senses. Through these precautions she was enabled to go in public and ask for alms, to transact business with many men, and, in cases of necessity, even to bring them into the house and accompany them, without ever looking at them or recognizing them otherwise than by their voice and walk. Berengarius, her first biographer, relates that as she was one day praying for a holy prelate she was wrapt in ecstasy and imagined herself in his antechamber, where she saw a matron of superhuman appearance coming out of the prelate's room. The lady, approaching Clare, said to her: "My daughter, do you wish to see this prelate?" Clare quickly replied, "Lady, I do not at all wish to see him." It was thus that the Saint guarded her eyes even in ecstasy. Nor was she

* She said to her Sisters: "I can with good conscience affirm that I have never intentionally looked in the face of a man." She observed this same modesty even towards her nearest relatives. (*Analecta juris pontificii.*)

less modest or reserved in using her hands. She never extended them even to receive alms, but begged the benefactor to place them on the rotary table which was at the grating for that purpose. If she was offered anything at the door by a cardinal or any other ecclesiastical dignitary, she always received it with covered hand. There were at that time attached to convents certain persons called *oblati*, who, without taking on themselves all the obligations of the religious state, were still considered as members of the family. Their business was to act as servants or mechanics, and they usually lived in houses near the convent. In admitting persons to this position there was a certain ceremony gone through, in which, amongst other things, the abbess took the hand of the person admitted. Whenever it fell to Clare's lot to perform this ceremony, she always did it with hands and face covered. She was always careful to wear a long habit, which reached to the ground and completely covered her feet ; and in sleeping she put her habit between her feet so that they might not touch one another. Even in sickness she would not allow those who waited on her to touch her ; and if her disease required the application of any ointment to her body, she always applied it herself, deeming it improper to have any one else apply it. She was wont to say to her religious, who were astonished at her extraordinary carefulness in this respect : "My Sisters, even though I were certain that no one saw me, I would never suffer any part of my body to remain uncovered except my hands and face." As Sister Illuminata, who likewise went barefoot through devotion, was returning one day from collecting alms, she raised her habit slightly above her foot to keep it from being soiled. For this she was reprimanded by the Saint as though she showed herself more careful of her clothes than of religious modesty. She was wont frequently to speak in terms of the highest praise of the holy virtue of virginity, and endeavored to instil into her religious

the highest love and esteem for it. She recommended them to utter frequently during the day this pious ejaculation: "O Lord, keep my soul pure." Out of love for this same virtue she honored with a special devotion the feasts of holy virgins by performing some extra works of piety, and cherished towards these saints a love which daily increased. In one word, through her purity of soul and body, which is more easily admired than imitated; through her voluntary poverty both in fact and in affection; and through her prompt, cheerful, and blind obedience, Clare was a most faithful observer of the evangelical counsels, and reached the very summit of Christian perfection.

CHAPTER XVII.

Humility of St. Clare.

THERE is a virtue which in a certain manner springs from man's nothingness, but which is in reality the source and support of every other virtue. Where it is found, there also are the other virtues to be found; and where it is wanting, there also every other virtue is wanting. This great virtue is humility—a virtue entirely unknown to pagan philosophy, which substituted for it the contrary vice. The Son of God Himself had to come down from heaven to teach it by word and example, and so rectify ideas and reform habits. Man came forth out of nothingness and ever bears in himself the impress of his origin. Blinded by his passions, he fails to perceive his lowliness, and contests at times the absolute dominion of his Creator. The angels, whom God created so supremely fair, were the first sad victims of this vice; and their fall was great in proportion to their elevation. The first man, too, amidst the riches and delights of the earthly paradise, proudly aspired to divine honors and to a complete independence of the Divinity; but he suddenly fell from

his soaring flight into the deepest poverty, into the thorns of the earth and the arms of death. As pride is the source of every vice, so is its opposite, humility, the foundation of every virtue. St. Clare was fully persuaded of this, for she knew her own nothingness; that is to say, she knew what forms the sage and the saint. Without speaking further of her humble submission to her sister before she had made her vows, it was through humility that she begged to be treated as a servant or professed as a lay Sister, and likewise sought to be appointed to collect alms. That same humility made her feel deeply pained when this latter humiliating office was taken from her, and also when the Abbess decided that she should make her profession as a choir-Sister; but in both cases her obedience came to the aid of her humility. Besides, she had the consolation of uniting the activity of Martha to the contemplation of Mary; for there was no low or menial service that she did not discharge. It was her delight to be engaged in sweeping, serving in the kitchen, waiting on the table, and such-like occupations. She took such delight in the discharge of these lowly duties that she sometimes fell into a state of ecstasy while engaged in them. On one occasion her sister Johanna called her to an account for her eagerness to be engaged in these menial occupations, and Clare was then obliged to confess that she found in them no hindrance to interior recollection or to the spirit of prayer and union with God. We have already made mention of many acts of humiliation performed by her, such as presenting herself to be beaten by her own subjects and serving on bended knees those afflicted with leprosy and other repulsive diseases. Clare considered it an honor to be allowed to serve her Sisters, for in serving them she imagined that she was ministering to the angels themselves. Her attention to the Sisters was none the less marked even when she was their superior, and she was frequently heard to say that the only position suited to her was to

minister to those wretched creatures whom the whole world abandoned. Her position as Abbess was so much opposed to her humility that she often sought to resign it. The very titles by which she was addressed caused her such pain that she frequently begged the Sisters to address her simply as Sister Clare. But the more she sought to humble herself the higher she rose in the estimation of her religious. The respect shown her caused her great pain, and she endeavored by every means in her power to imbue her subjects with a low opinion of herself. To this end she frequently said to them: "Ah! my Sisters, if you only knew me, you would not think or speak of me as you do. I am a sinner, an unworthy creature; and were it not for God's mercy, and your and others' prayers which continually sustain me, I know not what would become of me. If the Lord gives me any grace, He grants it on your account and for your good; as to myself, I am an ingrate and know not how to profit by them." By these and such-like sincere expressions of humility she kept far away every sentiment of vanity. In the latter years of her life she was honored and visited by the leading dignitaries of the Roman court, and was looked upon by the people as a saint; but she, who saw in herself only imperfections and nothingness, was deaf to praise and remained immovable in her profound humility. On one occasion a great multitude of people assembled before the convent-gate and asked that the Saint give them her blessing. When their request was brought to Clare she became greatly confused, and, bursting into tears, exclaimed: "Is it possible that any one should have such ideas of me who am unworthy to live upon the earth?" When persons came to speak to her of the favors obtained and the miracles wrought for them through her intercession, she always told them that it was not her prayers but those of her community and their own faith that worked these happy results. But at times the voice of malevolence and calumny made itself heard amidst the

testimonies of praise, and it was then that Clare's humility found room for exercise. She was always grieved at being made the object of popular applause, but the defamation of her character caused her no pain or annoyance. On such occasions she was even more joyful than usual, and was wont to say: "They are right in speaking ill of me. God be praised for it!" Enamored as she was of this virtue, she would have liked to infuse it into every one, and she never let pass an opportunity of showing its excellence both to her religious and others. To her brother, Father Francis, who applied himself with eagerness to his studies and made considerable progress in them, she spoke as follows: "I would like to see you possessed of such humility that you would be able to teach it to others by your example. I am not pleased at seeing so much made of that learning which puffs up. I would rather see you a lay Brother and an humble cook in a monastery than the first theologian in Paris." When she reflected on the great number of extraordinary graces which the Lord bestowed on her, lost in the consideration of her own nothingness and God's wonderful condescension to so unworthy a creature, she trembled at the strict reckoning she would one day have to render. She always studied to conceal as far as possible these divine favors; and what is known of them was of such a nature that it could not be concealed, or was extorted from her by command of her confessors, or, finally, was willed by God to be made known for the instruction and edification of her religious. And who knows how many other favors she may have received from Heaven which her humility succeeded in concealing? It was precisely by her heroic humility that the genuineness of her virtues was tested by that heavenly Spouse who humbled Himself unto death, even the death of the Cross. He saw her in her lowliness, was pleased with her, and fitted her for higher degrees of glory; for His justice loves to humble the proud and exalt the humble.

CHAPTER XVIII.

St. Clare's Reputation for Sanctity.

THE more the humble lower and hide themselves, the more God exalts them and makes them known, not merely in heaven, but, for the most part, even on earth. St. Clare is a proof of this; for, hidden as she was from her very childhood in the obscurity of a hermitage, she could not hinder the lustre of her early sanctity from shedding its beams far around. Even then she was admired by all, and predictions were freely made of her future holiness; and although she could not be readily approached on account of the watchfulness of her sister Johanna, many persons recommended themselves to her prayers. But what is more, the Sisters who lived with her both in the hermitage and the convent, and who had abundant opportunities of observing her conduct, always revered her as a saint, and spread her reputation for holiness far and wide both during life and after her death, as is clearly proven from the public processes of her canonization. She enjoyed a like character in the eyes of the many eminent servants of God at that time living in Umbria, a number of whom formed their judgment of her, not merely by popular repute, but on their own personal knowledge of her. From amongst these there were some who beheld her in mysterious visions with a garland of the fairest flowers encircling her neck, a symbol of the rare virtues that adorned her soul. Others, again ,beheld her by the side of her crucified Jesus, surrounded with marvellous splendor and giving forth heavenly fragrance. To others it was given to behold her inebriated with the delights of heavenly bliss. Others saw her elevated in the air beyond all her religious. Others saw her reclining on the bosom of the Virgin Mother and fondly caressed by the Infant Jesus. Others, in fine, saw her sharing in the

splendors which surrounded the august Child, and reflecting them even upon her religious. Three of the nuns, Marina, Lucia, and Andriola, have preserved for us another instance in which Heaven bore testimony to the sanctity of Clare. The Saint was in the twenty-seventh year of her age, when, on a certain Friday after complin, and after finishing the usual conference on humility, she remained in the chapter-room with the three Sisters above mentioned. As they were engaged in prayer the Sisters were struck with astonishment at seeing a resplendent pillar of fire descend upon the head of the Saint and remain there for some time. Its brightness was such that another nun, Sister Johanna, saw it through the crevices of her window. In the same year, also on Friday, and on a like occasion, there appeared, not merely to two or three but to all the nuns, a most brilliant light in the shape of a half-moon, which rested on the head of the Saint, and caused her countenance, like that of Moses, to emit rays of wonderful brightness. God then, as if to crown His testimony to Clare's sanctity, caused her to be rapt in ecstasy, leaving the nuns overcome with astonishment and gladness, and more than ever desirous of imitating the extraordinary virtues of their sainted Abbess. These and other supernatural gifts could not and should not be concealed, because, as the Archangel Raphael said to Tobias, "to reveal the works of God redounds to God's honor." From these premises we can readily infer in what esteem the people held the Saint on account of her rare virtues and extraordinary endowments. The same will cause us not to be surprised at the fact that her confessors, and even prelates, bishops, and cardinals,—in a word, the most learned and enlightened persons of her day,—looked upon her as a saint, and sought to recommend themselves to her prayers as well by letter as by the intervention of others, and not seldom in their own person.

To mention an instance, it is a matter well worthy of

being recorded that Cardinal Peter Colonna desired to become an *oblatus* in the convent of the Saint. This high dignitary accordingly set out one day from Rome for Montefalco, and begged the Saint for the favor of admission amongst her *oblati*. He wished thereby to give St. Clare a special proof of his respect, and at the same time cause her to have a certain claim on him, so that she might be able as Abbess to dispose of his authority and influence in favor of her convent. On this occasion there arose a beautiful rivalry in humility on the part both of the one and the other; but the pious cardinal was determined if possible to overcome the Saint, and insisted so earnestly on her complying with his request that she was finally obliged to yield. What an edifying spectacle it was to see this purpled dignitary of such high rank kneeling at the feet of an humble nun, promising her obedience, and not rising from his lowly posture till she had blessed him with the holy sign of the cross! It was the same cardinal that wrote her, by order of Pope Clement V., a letter in which he recommended to her prayers the needs of holy Church and of the Sovereign Pontiff. Cardinal James Colonna was likewise a devoted admirer of the sanctity of Clare. In token of his esteem he presented to her the precious relic of the finger of St. Anne—that very finger which, even to the present day, is miraculously preserved clothed with flesh, and is still shown to pious pilgrims for their veneration. He also sent her a cross, filled with rare and precious relics, which is likewise still preserved in the convent at Montefalco. In fine, to be convinced of St. Clare's widespread reputation for sanctity, it is sufficient to call to mind what we have mentioned in the preceding chapter, how the people assembled in crowds around the convent, saluting her as saint and imploring her blessing, to her great confusion and shame. If there were any persons who doubted of her sanctity, they were soon obliged to change both their ideas and their language.

Such is the homage which Christian virtue receives even from that world that seldom practises it and not rarely persecutes it—a homage which is certainly far more sincere than that which interest and ambition bestow on the great ones of the earth and their hypocritical virtues.

CHAPTER XIX.

St. Clare recovers her Interior Peace.

IN THE seventh chapter of this biography we gave a general review of the many and fierce temptations to which St. Clare was continually exposed for a period of eleven years, as well as of the great sufferings she had to undergo in her struggle between the flesh and the spirit. We likewise mentioned the spiritual dryness and desolation of soul which she had to endure in the midst of the unholy suggestions of the evil one and the allurements of her senses. Far from being opposed to suffering, she would have welcomed her trials if they did not bring with them the danger of offending God, the sole object of her love. But what sighs and tears did not this thought alone cost her during those years of her trial which seemed to her so long! It is true that her heavenly Spouse did not forget to console her during those years with many intervals of light, nay, even showed from time to time by the most signal favors how pleasing her constancy and fortitude were to Him; nevertheless she lived in continual apprehension and fear, and consequently begged and conjured her good God to deign to give back to her that peace of heart and sensible fervor which she had enjoyed up to the twentieth year of her age. It happened at this time, on one of the many occasions in which she was wont to pray, that she fell into an ecstasy and had the following vision. She saw a person who endeavored to set fire to a bundle of straw which he held in his hand; but the straw did not take fire. Hereupon she heard a voice suggesting

to steep the straw in oil, which being done it instantly caught fire. When the vision disappeared, the Saint understood clearly its meaning. By the straw were figured her holy desires, which would be set on fire and consumed by the fervor of her love only when they were thoroughly permeated with the oil of humility, which oil could be obtained only through the cleansing filter of temptation. Clare instantly prostrated herself before the divine Majesty; buried herself in the abyss of her own nothingness; confessed herself deserving of every punishment and privation; made the most generous acts of perpetual conformity to the will of God; declared herself ready to endure even greater sufferings unto death, and to drink the bitter chalice to the very dregs if such were the divine pleasure; and finished with begging God never to abandon her in her trials and combats. This new and perfect act of humility and this heroic resignation to God's will instantly brought her peace—that peace of God which, as the Apostle says, surpasseth all understanding, and is a foretaste of that bliss which the blessed enjoy in heaven. Clare now seemed to herself as though she were born to a new life and lived under a new sky. Her divine Spouse Jesus had, as it were, awaked from His mystic sleep and commanded the sea and the winds and brought on a great calm. Darkness disappeared from her mind, and the stormy waves of her heart were stilled; her former serenity returned, and her anxieties, sighs, and tears were at an end. He who has not traversed this raging sea of the passions, or who is not possessed of the burning love of Clare, can form no just conception of these storms. Not so joyful or contented is the mariner who has reached the port in safety, escaping from the fury of the tempest and from shipwreck, as was our Clare, now that her peace of soul and spiritual sweetness made her believe that the danger of spiritual shipwreck was far removed. Free and joyous now, she ran with dilated heart along those pathways of

the divine precepts and counsels which from narrow had become broad and spacious, and it seemed to her as though she were walking on the road which leads straight to heaven. It is, however, a singular thing, at least as viewed from the narrow standpoint of human intelligence, and a thing well worthy of being noticed, that our Saint received from God during the eleven years of her spiritual dryness and temptations more light and learning than she ever received during the years of her calmness either before or after. God, who is ever wonderful in His saints, knows how to conceal the treasures of His wisdom from the wise ones of this world and to communicate them to His humble servants; and these latter are never so humble as when they see their own original nothingness and their own weakness in the clear light of temptation. St. Clare herself frequently acknowledged that she had received during those years such great knowledge and instruction from God that she could reason not merely on divine but human things without having ever studied them. Of this she gave proof on different occasions, as we shall afterwards have occasion to mention. These signal favors both of light and grace excited in her feelings of the deepest gratitude and an ardent desire to advance more and more in the love of God. In point of fact, she did advance continually; and, what never happened to her before, she felt that she was making progress. But this state of perfect tranquillity did not last long, for the sea of life, over which we sail towards eternity, is never still; nay, a calm is more dangerous than a storm. God willed that Clare's merits should continually increase; He wished to purify her more and more; He wished that she should live and die crucified with Jesus Christ. For this reason He permitted that His beloved bride should enter on a new scene of strife, into labors and struggles rather external than internal, and should be visited with serious infirmities, as we shall afterwards see.

CHAPTER XX.

St. Clare receives the Impression of the Mysteries and Instruments of the Passion and of the Symbol of the Most Holy Trinity. She afterwards builds a Convent Church.

T. CLARE had reached the age of thirty-three years—the age at which the Redeemer of the world gave up His life on the altar of the cross, thus completing the great sacrifice which He came to offer for the reconciliation of Heaven and earth. This period was likewise to form an epoch in the life of the Saint and in the annals of the Order to which she belonged. As she was already in spirit a living image of her crucified Redeemer, so did He will that she should be transformed into His own image even in the flesh. From her tenderest years she had been accustomed to meditate with the most rapt attention on each and every one of the various sorrowful scenes in the passion of her beloved Jesus, and to offer Him her most respectful condolence in His awful agony. On a certain day it happened that she felt herself more than ordinarily attracted to this holy exercise; she felt her heart inflamed with the most intense feelings of love and compassion, and her soul elevated, as it were, above itself and wholly absorbed in the contemplation of those mysteries. On a sudden she saw standing before her the august object of her sympathetic grief, the Saviour Himself, clothed in a white garment, and wearing on His countenance a smile of sweetest tenderness. He was in the guise of a pilgrim, and bore His cross upon His shoulders. Turning towards her, He said that He wished to plant that very cross in her heart. He spoke, and it was done. The words of the Almighty were immediately followed by a wonderful effect. That very instant, not only was the cross planted in her heart, but all the mysteries of the passion were impressed upon

and depicted in the cavity of that same heart. She felt at the moment all the greatness of the favor and the miracle, and thenceforward contemplated the sufferings of Jesus, not in Jerusalem or on Calvary, but in herself. We would not dare to inquire into the nature of Clare's sentiments and affections during those happy moments. Let whosoever thinks that he can represent them to himself know that every effort of his imagination will fall far short of the reality.

The miraculous proof of the divine beneficence which we have just recorded was certainly great and singular, being hitherto unheard of in the history of the Church: but it was not all. There are two leading mysteries of our holy faith which are closely connected and on which all others depend; namely, the mystery of the passion and death of the Saviour, and that of the Unity and Trinity of God. Now the Almighty, who dwelt in Clare as in a temple of predilection, wished to enrich her with the symbols of both these august mysteries; He wished to impress upon her with His own finger, not the mere precepts of the law, but the abridgment of all the teaching of faith, writing it, not on tables, as He did of old on Sinai, but on the inner organs of her body. And here is another wonder: there appeared in the integument of the Saint's gall three little balls or globular pellets, exactly alike in size, weight, and color, and so arranged as to form an equilateral triangle. What is still more wonderful is that each one of these weighed just as much as the other two. But we shall have occasion to speak again of these wonderful evidences of divine favor when we are describing the opening of the Saint's body after her death. We simply remark here that Clare received these impressions in the first year of the fourteenth century, during the pontificate of Boniface VIII.

Seventy-six years before, St. Francis, the founder of the great Franciscan Order, had received the *Stigmata*, or impression of the five sacred wounds, and already the

report of the miracle had excited the admiration of the world. Forty-five years afterwards the great Doctor of the Church, St. Bonaventure, employed his eloquent pen in describing this wonderful event, and justly designated it as unique and hitherto unheard of in the entire history of the preceding centuries. But what would he have said had he survived till the time of our Saint! As the saints are strangers to envy, and have no other end in view save the glory of God and the interest of truth, we are perfectly justified in instituting a comparison between St. Francis and St. Clare. A seraph made the impression of the *Stigmata* on St. Francis, but the Redeemer Himself made it on St. Clare; Francis received the impression of the five wounds, but Clare had pictured in her all the mysteries of the passion. And not only of the passion, but she likewise received the symbol of the sublime mystery of God's Unity and Trinity. She received them, too, not for a short time, so that they afterwards disappeared, but for ages to come, so that they were miraculously preserved, and can be touched and seen at the present day. Many eminent historians have written on this extraordinary privilege of St. Clare; still we cannot help expressing our astonishment that Catholic authors have not striven more to make it known.

God had fashioned for Himself in Clare a temple of predilection, enriched with the choicest symbolic ornaments of faith; and the Saint on her part shortly afterwards formed the resolution of building for Him a material temple which would not be so small or so unsuited to His majesty as the old church of St. Catherine which the poverty of the good religious had obliged them to use up to this time. In point of fact, her sister, Blessed Johanna had previously formed the intention of building a new church, and had obtained the bishop's permission for it. This desire of her sister was transmitted to Clare, and grew continually stronger in her

during the years of her Superiorship, but the poverty of her convent hindered the execution of her designs. She did not lose hope, however, that God would one day open for her the way and give her the means of accomplishing her design. And so it happened; for by God's dispensation her reputation for sanctity continually increased, and the minds of the faithful were thus disposed to aid her in the fulfilment of her pious intention. Clare accordingly set about the work, relying on God's help and the kindly disposition of friends and benefactors. After obtaining the permission of her superiors and the consent of her religious, she succeeded in getting together a sum of money through alms and the economical management of the convent revenues, and so prepared the material for building. She then requested the bishop of the diocese, Nicholas Albertinus, a Dominican afterwards created cardinal by Benedict XI., likewise a Dominican, to bless the corner-stone of the new edifice. The bishop did not hesitate to comply with her request, and immediately sent her the stone already blessed. With it he sent a letter which is still extant, and which is directed to a certain man named Bordone, telling him to take his place in laying this foundation-stone of the new church which was to be built in honor of God, the Blessed Virgin, the Holy Cross, and St. Catherine. The feast of St. John the Baptist, in the year 1303, was fixed for the ceremony, and it took place with all solemnity and in presence of a large assemblage of the faithful. The foundations were soon laid, and the walls rose rapidly; and in less than a year the whole church was completed, to the great surprise of all. Only a very small remnant of this ancient church is standing at the present day—a part of the choir; but a much larger building has since been erected. The Saint having thus arrived at the term of her desires, it seemed as though she could never tear herself away from this church, because it bore the title dearest to her; that is, the title of

the Holy Cross, which was doubly impressed on her heart. She spent there many hours of the day and a good part of the night; thither she caused herself to be borne by her religious when she was sick; there she wished, as we shall see, to breathe her last sigh, and wing her flight thence to heaven. She was always and specially solicitous for the foundation and completion of the living temples of God, as well in herself as in her religious and in men generally, but she likewise merited the praise which the Holy Ghost bestowed on Simon, the son of Onias—that, namely, he not only took care of his people, but likewise founded the height of the temple.

CHAPTER XXI.

The Infused Knowledge of St. Clare, and the Use which she made of it for the Salvation of Souls.

THE Saviour of the world not only worked miracles Himself and verified prophecies in order to found His Church and prove His divinity, but He was likewise pleased to give the Holy Ghost visibly to His Apostles and invisibly to the primitive faithful in order to enrich them with like wonderful gifts and graces. St. Paul tells us that it is one and the same Spirit that distributes gifts, but that the gifts and graces are manifold. Some received the spirit of knowledge; others the spirit of prophecy and discerning of spirits; others the gift of tongues or of miracles; others received other gifts, until the tree of Christianity was planted with firm roots in the earth. But the Church has never yet been wanting in great saints, whom the Lord from time to time enriched with those gifts which He distributed amongst the primitive Christians. St. Clare was one of these saints, and was possessed in an extraordinary degree of the gifts of the Holy Ghost.

There are not wanting writers who affirm that the Holy Spirit descended visibly upon her, as of old upon the Apostles, in the form of tongues of fire; but this report probably arose from the fact that a pillar of fire descended upon her, as we mentioned in the eighteenth chapter, in which we treated of her reputation for sanctity. However this may be, it is beyond all doubt that she possessed amongst other gifts the gift of knowledge. And what is still more wonderful and shows more especially the favor of the Almighty is that she obtained this precious gift amidst the darkness of the purgative way which, as we remarked before, she had to traverse for many years. When I say the gift of knowledge I include in it likewise the gift of wisdom. The former teaches us to understand the true value of created things and to use them in a manner advantageous to the salvation of our souls; the latter teaches us to know and judge aright of higher or eternal things, and was for Clare the fountain whence flowed all her other gifts. Many learned men of her time, theologians and philosophers, propounded to our Saint the most abstruse questions and received the most wonderful solution of them, so that they were forced to bear testimony to the rare extent of the knowledge with which the Holy Ghost had enriched her, and were struck with amazement, even as the doctors of the synagogue were astonished at the wisdom which the Child Jesus displayed in the temple at Jerusalem when he was but twelve years old. Among the many admirers of her wisdom are counted bishops and theologians, and one of these latter remarked to Cardinal Peter Colonna that her learning was far superior to that of the theologians themselves; and added, in allusion to an answer she had given to a certain question put to her, that Solomon himself could not have answered better. It is a pity that the circumstances of the time in which she lived have hidden from us the light which the Saint threw on many difficult passages of Holy Scripture and

on mystic theology; nevertheless, we shall endeavor to narrate what we can gather from the acts of her beatification and canonization.

Her confessor, Don Thomas, of Gubbio, once asked her for an explanation of those words which the Lord spoke to Moses, as recorded in Exodus xxxiii. 23: "Thou shalt see my back parts; but my face thou shalt not see."* The Saint answered that by the expression *back parts* were meant creatures, and by the word *face* the divine essence; so that the whole phrase signified that Moses would never enjoy on earth that clear vision of God which is reserved for the blessed in heaven, but that he would have a special apprehension of God through the medium of created things. It was this same confessor that had introduced into the convent the recitation of the canonical hours, and it is truly wonderful that the Saint instantly understood all the rubrics relating thereto, so that she could instruct her religious in them, and likewise instantly knew the whole divine office to memory. A certain Biagio Paolucci expressed his astonishment at hearing the able answers she gave to many difficult questions propounded to her by two theologians, and testified still further that, having asked her how she could answer those questions with such ease, she replied to him: "This gift is given me by God for my confusion, as I do not know how to derive profit from it." But Father Francis, her brother, experienced more than others the extent of her knowledge. He was obliged to confess that he learned more from his sister than he had ever learned either from his teachers or his books. For this reason he often betook himself to the convent to propose to her his doubts and difficulties, and always came away satis-

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* According to many holy fathers, the human nature of Jesus Christ and His kingdom on earth are to be understood by the expression, *the back parts* of God. God showed to Moses in a symbolic manner the mercies of Jesus Christ and the glories of His Church on earth.

fied. She was perhaps less reserved in disclosing to her brother the richness of her light, but she was far less ready to discuss scientific matters with other persons. She was mindful of her sex and station; and the humility which she cultivated assiduously when most highly favored by God and men made her feel the greatest repugnance in manifesting the gifts of her wisdom. She blushed and often refused to appear before certain persons, out of fear lest she should be led into learned discussions; and then only did she allow herself to be moved to see them when she felt herself urged either by the impulses of her heart, or by motives of charity towards her neighbor, or else by the command of her confessor. It was her love for her neighbor, which burned brightly in her soul and which she esteemed superior to all other motives except her love for God, that most frequently made her speak, and speak, too, with a most convincing eloquence. Her language was indeed simple and commonplace, as her simplicity of heart dictated, but her thoughts were insinuating, devout, profound, and always in accordance with the teaching of Holy Scripture and the Fathers. So great were the force and earnestness that accompanied her words when she undertook to bring souls back to God or to confirm them in the ways of piety, that it was easy to see from what a depth of charity her arguments must have proceeded. The same was evident from the wonderful effects which her words produced on those who listened to them. By her discourses she made those who were weak in virtue strong, the vacillating firm; the zealous she made still more zealous; she refuted and crushed heresies and converted heretics; and when treating of subjects regarding God's mercy and other perfections she was frequently seen to become absorbed in ecstasy. We have already remarked that her position as Abbess obliged her at times to give instructions to her religious on the Christian virtues and regular observance; we now merely remark that her dis-

courses were always filled with most convincing arguments and with examples drawn from the sacred Scriptures, and were delivered with a grace and unction that made even the most austere practice of virtue amiable and attractive. She did not use her knowledge for the benefit of her religious only, but likewise to the advantage of many others. To give some instances:—we read of two preachers, one a Dominican and the other a Franciscan, who were sent to the convent of the Holy Cross to announce there the word of God, and who, after some conversations with the Saint, experienced such unusual consolation of soul and felt themselves urged on with such extraordinary impulses towards Christian perfection, that they departed in amazement at her wonderful learning and sanctity. A cavalier of Spoleto, by name John Maffei, deposed that he had heard many learned and spiritual persons speaking, but that he never heard any one who could at all approach Clare in depth of doctrine. To her eloquent and penetrating exhortations he attributed his own abandonment of the vanities and sinful pleasures of the world. He added that he had heard Cardinal Peter Colonna use these words: "I would not lose for all the gold in the world the opportunity of conversing with Sister Clare of the Cross; because I have found such consolation in her words, that in my whole life I have never experienced greater contentment." The same cavalier had a son named Father Napoleon, of the Order of St. Augustine; and he too, in conversing with St. Clare, felt himself moved with such vehement affections and such a sweet interior change, that in his astonishment he broke forth into tears of consolation. Two other men, natives of Spoleto, admitted that they owed to the learned and mellifluous discourses of the Saint all their spiritual progress. And a certain hermit of Spoleto, named Brother Giglio, declared that he was almost enraptured at the wisdom which flowed from the lips of the Saint during a long conference

which he once had with her. When we were speaking of St. Clare's love for her neighbor we recounted several instances of sinners whom she drew to penance; it will not be out of place if we add here, as a proof of the Saint's heavenly wisdom, another instance of her victory over sin. There lived during her time at Montefalco a man who had been guilty of many great crimes, nay, even murders, and who was on that account the terror and the disgrace of his native town. Full of pride, he spurned every warning and every advice; but the unsearchable wisdom of God's mercy so arranged matters that he had a conversation with Clare. She spoke to him with such force and earnestness, that this great sinner recognized the horror of the abyss in which he was sunk and instantly resolved to change his life. He immediately threw himself at the feet of a confessor, repented of his criminal conduct, set out on a pilgrimage for the shrine of St. James of Galicia, returned a penitent, and remained such till death. It is thus the saints employ their talents and their gifts.

CHAPTER XXII.

St. Clare Disputes with Heretics and Refutes them.

THE infused wisdom of Clare served likewise as a rampart against heresy, and aided her in confounding every heretic with whom she had occasion to dispute. We read in the fifth lesson of her office, as given in the breviary of the Augustinian Order, that she refuted the false doctrines of heretics and satisfied the philosophers who propounded to her the most abstruse questions. We have already spoken of those heretics who were secretly spreading their pernicious doctrines in Italy, and who dared to approach even to the enclosure of St. Clare's convent. They were known under various names, such as Beg-

hards, Beguines, Bizocchi, Fraticelli, Brothers and Sisters of the Free Spirit, and other such titles. These infamous sects seemed to have been extinct from the time when Blessed James of Bevagna won a complete victory over Ottonello till the year 1304; but precisely in that year, that is to say four years before the death of Clare, they were revived by Bentivenga of Gubbio. He succeeded in deluding many persons, both men and women, who went around through the province of Umbria, clad in penitential garments and carrying a cross and a scourge in their hands, seeking proselytes and inviting them to their secret and shameful meetings. As these heretics knew how to assume the appearance of sanctity, they at first deceived many incautious persons; but St. Clare saw through their disguise by the aid of heavenly light and her gift of discerning spirits, and quickly unveiled their insidious plans. She remarked to Sister Johanna Aegidia and others that under these appearances they concealed the most artful inventions of the Evil One. Notwithstanding this, Bentivenga, made bold by his many easy conquests, conceived the foolish idea of gaining St. Clare, of whose sanctity he had heard much, over to his party. With this end in view he came to Montefalco in 1306, visited the convent of the Holy Cross, and asked to have a conversation with the Saint. His dress and demeanor bore a certain semblance of sanctity, and his language at first seemed to indicate a man of contemplation and of deep interior life; but his piety and mysticism were unfortunately deeply tainted with that detestable quietism which, though frequently crushed in the past centuries, has just as frequently endeavored to raise its infernal head. His hypocritical character was plainly shown up in his conversation with Clare when he affirmed that the highest point of perfection to which the soul can arrive is to lose every personal affection, and that, when it reaches this point, it is perfectly free to be wholly united with God no matter how much it may indulge the

inclinations of the flesh. The Saint was horrified at the open enunciation of those impious doctrines, subversive as they were of all morality, although she knew beforehand the odious character of these sectaries. She burned with a holy indignation, but she was careful not to transgress the bounds of moderation. She undertook, therefore, to give him in a respectful manner a theological refutation of his doctrine; but their dispute grew warm, and kept on till an advanced hour, so that they were obliged to remit it to the following day. Clare did not sleep that night, but spent it in fervent prayer, beseeching God to be merciful and touch the heart of that seducer of souls. As she prayed, the Lord Himself appeared to her with angry countenance and said that she should not give this Bentivenga such considerate answers, for he was His determined enemy; but that she should speak to him as to one who in his hard-heartedness had wilfully outraged the august honor of God. The heresiarch returned to the convent on the following day, and put forward all his fallacies that he might ensnare the Saint; but she unveiled his sophisms and refuted his false views by her prompt and solid answers. In the progress of the controversy he asked her if the fact that God permitted sin to be committed did not take away its malice. St. Clare replied: "If God's permission took away sin, there would no longer be any sin in the world. The permission, nay, the concurrence of God in all human actions is good in and for itself, considered as an action, and ordained to a good end; it is only men who abuse their faculties and free-will, and in this lies the malice of sin which God never wills." The heretic then asked her whether the virgin St. Agnes was more pleasing in the sight of God than the penitent Magdalen. The Saint answered: "I know that the sins of Magdalen could not have pleased God, and that virginity has always been pleasing to Him, but it may well have happened that Magdalen after her conversion performed

such perfect acts of virtue, and grew so fervent in her penance, that her sanctity surpassed that of St. Agnes." Bentivenga, who had come well prepared with arguments, commenced now to bring forward quotations from the Scriptures and the Fathers in defence of his errors, which he no longer concealed. Hereupon the Saint said to him: "I will enter on no more discussions with you, as I see plainly how you misuse the Holy Scriptures. Unfortunate man! I understand better now the vision which I lately had of a blind man who came to me and who caused me great fear by his blindness. If you are not convinced by the evidence of the arguments which I have laid before you during these two unsuccessful conferences, nothing remains for me but to weep over your destruction, as I see that all that your Creator and Redeemer has done for you is made void through your own perversity. Blind as you are, and leader of the blind, you will inevitably fall into that pit which your own obstinate malice has opened." Whilst Clare wept, the heretic laughed and scoffed at her tears, saying, "I pray God to give you the same spirit as I have." The Saint replied: "But I entreat the Divine Goodness that I may suffer every evil, even death itself, rather than be allowed to fall into your error." The heretic said: "If I were not afraid to preach, I would like to convert the whole world and make it holy." The Saint replied: "Therefore my spirit is better than yours; for I am not afraid to preach all that I believe, even though I had to suffer the most cruel martyrdom in support of it. He who is near to God knows not fear; learn therefore from your very fear to recognize the falsity of your spirit." This dispute lasted from early morning till mid-day, and Clare undoubtedly lost not the merit of her zeal; but that was all she gained, for this time she succeeded not in converting the heretic, though she refuted his heresy. She was not so fortunate in this controversy as was Blessed James in his controversy with Ottonello, whom he con-

verted, probably because he was rather deceived himself than deceiving others, or for other inscrutable reasons of divine Providence. When the incorrigible Bentivenga had gone away, the Saint, turning to her nuns, who had heard the whole dispute, said: "All that I have said I have said for the honor of God; I myself would likewise fall, and would be no better than Bentivenga, if God did not support me by His grace." *

But if Clare was unsuccessful with Bentivenga, she succeeded in the case of Father John of Bevagna, who had imbibed the same false doctrines. This priest was the confessor of the convent of the Holy Cross, and allowed himself to be carried away by an excessive spirituality and a too great zeal for the observance of the rule. The Holy Ghost says, "Let him who stands take heed lest he fall," and Father John was lacking in this holy cautiousness; for, through a long intercourse with a man who was tainted with this heresy, he himself gradually imbibed the pernicious doctrine, without however indulging in those detestable excesses which these sectaries deemed lawful. From the very time in which he commenced to discharge the duty of father confessor Clare had perceived, as if by instinct, the poison which he carried concealed in his breast. In order to make

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* When Clare could not convert this heretic she accused him before an ecclesiastical tribunal, so that he might be made harmless and not be able to lead others astray. The fact, therefore, that she entered into a conversation on religious matters with him is in nowise detrimental to her sanctity, for he was a concealed heretic and had not as yet been publicly condemned by the Church. It is thus we read of St. Jane Frances de Chantal, foundress of the Order of the Visitation, and of St. Vincent de Paul, founder of the Order of Sisters of Charity and of the Congregation of Lazarists, that they both held communication with the Jansenists as long as their errors were secret. This they did in order to convert them. But when they published heretical works, as the "Augustinus," St. Vincent was the first to call for their condemnation, and warned every one against them. (*Analecta j. p.*)

sure that her suspicions were well grounded, and at the same time to render the poison less dangerous by showing up its true nature, she sought in her confessions and conferences with him to prolong the discourse more than usual. One day she said to him: "Please tell me, father confessor, why has God so disposed matters that a soul can never enjoy true and lasting peace in this life. Let it have arrived at ever so high a degree of perfection, it is nevertheless disturbed, its zeal is inflamed, and it grows impatient at seeing the offences committed against the divine majesty." Father John replied: "I do not understand what you mean. I know a person who has already for four years enjoyed real peace, and there is nothing that can disturb him." Clare said: "If this man were a Christian, would he not be disturbed at seeing God offended?" "No," replied her confessor, "for true peace consists in allowing one's self to be changed or disturbed by nothing whatsoever." "That is not possible," replied Clare. "Go and give that man a blow on the head with a stone, and then come and tell me if he be not disturbed." "There is no doubt," replied Father John, "that whoever has feeling must be annoyed at such an offence, in spite of himself, and even show signs of it." "This is exactly what I wanted you to admit," said Clare. "But how can you maintain that that person enjoys true peace who is annoyed at a trifling injury done himself, but is not at all troubled at the insults offered to his Lord and God? The soul that shows no sign of grief for the sins committed against its heavenly Father, but is wholly indifferent to them, is not living but dead; because if God be the life of the soul, how can it not be alive to the insults offered Him, while it resents those offered even to the body? Pardon me, my father; you yourself are the one that imagines you have peace, but you do not perceive that you are at war with your Creator. Seek for other peace than this, if you do not wish to experience eternal torments. Put

aside this shameful doctrine with which in your too great credulity you have allowed yourself to become imbued, and believe this poor nun who desires your salvation." This was the means which God made use of to achieve a triumph of His grace. Father John instantly confessed his error, declared that no one had ever before laid the truth before him with such force, made a recantation, did penance for his fault, and promised to be more careful in future and to keep away from certain persons—a promise which he faithfully kept. The Saint rejoiced at this signal triumph, but she rejoiced in the Lord, and with the liveliest gratitude referred to Him all the glory of it. The fact that Clare was instrumental in rescuing such important prey from eternal death could not but excite against her the hatred and vengeance of hell. The powers of darkness persecuted her and her religious with the most frightful temptations; but all their efforts were vain, for God protected them. The demon went so far as to appear to the Saint, whom he specially hated, in visible form; but this only served to show still better the profound faith and unshaken constancy of our heroine, for she quickly drove him away with victorious contempt. The fiend withdrew, but with hostile intentions, and afterwards succeeded in awakening in the breasts of certain persons their ancient feelings of dislike for the Saint and her religious family. All his efforts, however, resulted differently from what he expected, and succeeded rather in augmenting God's glory and the merit of those souls who were persecuted for the sake of justice. In the mean time the Saint kept constant watch over the plots of the heretics; and though she could not raise her voice in public to bring back to the faith those who had been perverted and to warn the incautious, she made continual use of her solicitations, her prayers, and her influence to induce the ministers of the Gospel to preach the Catholic doctrine both in public and in private in opposition to those dangerous innova-

tors. Through her means many abandoned their errors, others were saved from falling into them by being made more cautious, and Clare's native place was kept free from heretical contagion.

CHAPTER XXIII.

St. Clare's Spirit of Prophecy.

OD, WHO gives being to all things, who maintains them in existence and governs them, who in His eternity has all things present before Him, and who holds in His power the hearts of men—He alone knows the future as clearly as He knows the past. But God has been often pleased to communicate His knowledge of future events to certain privileged and holy souls. The time was to come, according to the Prophet Joel, when God would so pour out His spirit that not only the sons but also the daughters of the people of God would prophesy. That time was the coming of the Messias. In point of fact, the God-Man had scarcely taken flesh in the womb of the Virgin Mother, when that Mother uttered the sublime prophetic canticle, the *Magnificat.* Mary's cousin Elizabeth likewise prophesied, and the holy widow Anna in the temple, and the four daughters of Philip; and the spirit of prophecy has never since been wanting in the true Church. God likewise bestowed on Clare the gift of prophecy in reward for her heroic constancy in defending the faith, and in testimony of her spotless sanctity. The proof of this are the many events which she foretold and which happened exactly as she predicted them. Clare had predicted, four years before, that those heretics of whom we spoke in the preceding chapter would reappear in new disguises in Umbria, and she warned her nuns to be on their guard against

them. And when the time foreseen by her had arrived, she called her nuns together and told them that on such a day two of those heretics would come to their convent clad in the garb of religious, and added that she had seen one of these in the form of a hog and the other in the disguise of a wolf. They came as she foretold; but she unmasked them and put them to confusion, and then told them with evangelical boldness never again to dare approach her convent. On another occasion she warned her religious that on a certain day which she named a person would come to the convent, who, under pretext of spirituality, would endeavor to lay snares for their virginal purity. In the difficult conclave held at Perugia on the death of Benedict XI. many persons were extremely desirous that the choice of the cardinals should fall on the bishop of Sutri. When Clare heard this she said that their wishes would not be realized, and that, contrary to all expectations, a foreigner would be elected. This came to pass, for the bishop of Bordeaux was elected pope, and took the title of Clement V. He it was that afterwards transferred the papal residence to Avignon in France. She also foretold the unexpected elevation of her bishop, Nicholas Albertino, to the dignity of cardinal, and the deposition from the cardinalate of James Colonna during the pontificate of Boniface VIII., and his restoration to that dignity under Clement V. She told Sister Catherine, one of her nuns, who was excessively lamenting a slight illness of one of her brothers who was a religious, that she would never again see him in life. He afterwards died of that illness, and his sister never saw him again. A certain nun, named Sister Matthiola, had been elected, very much against her will, abbess of the convent of St. Paul in Montefalco, and sent a message to the Saint requesting her to recommend her to God. Before the messenger commenced to deliver the message, Clare, anticipating, said: "Go back to Sister Matthiola and tell

her to be of good cheer, for within three days she will be comforted as she desires." The prediction was fulfilled, for on the third day the Superioress accepted the Sister's resignation. One day the Saint was conversing on spiritual matters with two young girls in presence of some of her nuns. One of these girls paid greater attention to what she said than the other, and from this the Sisters were disposed to conclude that the first would become a nun. But the holy Abbess said: "She who pays more attention will remain in the world, and the other will enter the convent." It happened a few days afterwards just as she foretold.

A certain Margaret Filippangeli, of Spoleto, who was on her way to Assisi to satisfy her devotion, stopped first at Montefalco that she might make a visit to St. Clare. The Saint told her that she would experience great spiritual consolations in Assisi, but that she would have a sad return. The event corresponded to the prediction; for Margaret experienced in the church of Portiuncula extraordinary interior consolations, but was seized with a fever, so that she returned home with great difficulty. Another native of Spoleto, named Petruccio Tommasi, had a dissolute son, whom he recommended to the prayers of the Saint. Clare spent the whole night in prayer that she might gain that soul to God. On the following morning she predicted that this youth would quit the world and devote himself to the service of God in the Order of St. Francis. Her prediction was fulfilled within a few days. She also foretold the unexpected arrival of Father Aegidius, of whom we made mention previously; and when he knocked at the convent-gate, she remarked, to the great astonishment of the Sisters, that that was Father Aegidius. She also announced to her nuns the arrival of a devout pilgrim from Carcasonne in Languedoc, by name Margaret, who had set out from her native country to visit the holy places at Rome, and who passed through Montefalco and called

at the convent of the Holy Cross the very day and hour foretold by our Saint. Clare saluted her by name, treated her with the utmost charity, and conversed with her for a long time on spiritual subjects, speaking in her own language, so that the nuns who heard her were astonished at finding that their holy Abbess had, in addition to her other endowments, the miraculous gift of tongues.

Through this infused spirit of prophecy God frequently caused her to penetrate the secrets of hearts, especially with regard to the nuns entrusted to her care. Hence it happened that she often said in their chapter-meetings: "My Sisters, some one amongst us has committed a fault and does not accuse herself of it because it is hidden." If this prudent hint did not produce immediate effect, she generally added a charitable and secret correction. Not only did she know the hidden defects of others, but she likewise knew their secret good actions. This gift of the Saint was so well known in the convent that the religious used to say to one another: "Let us be very careful, for the Lord reveals everything to our Abbess." We shall confine ourselves to one or two instances out of the many that we could adduce in proof of Clare's knowledge of secret things. The abbot of St. Erasmus, in the neighborhood of Cesi, was in doubt as to Clare's prophetic spirit, of which he had heard much, and wished to go to Montefalco that he might get better informed on the subject. Arriving at the convent, he asked to see the Abbess, and after a brief salutation wished to pass for the abbot of St. Julian. The Saint said to him: "You are not the abbot of St. Julian, but of the abbey of the sons of Signor Ruggiero." These were in fact the founders of the abbey of St. Erasmus. She then went on to tell the abbot of the various events in his life, which she related with such accuracy that he was completely astonished and fully convinced that she was divinely endowed. As he rose to depart, he begged the Saint to

give him some salutary advice. She said to him: "Give up that sin to which you are addicted; otherwise God will punish you." The sin was hidden, but he knew now that there was no use trying to hide it from Clare; he accordingly admitted it with heartfelt sorrow, and went away with a firm resolution of amending. A certain Father James Gonzio, a Lector in Sacred Theology of the Order of St. Francis, had been for a long time tempted to leave his Order, but had kept the temptation hidden from every one till the idea struck him to make it known to Clare. He accordingly went to see her and had a long conversation with her, but still had not the courage to make known his temptation. He was on the point of leaving, when the Saint asked him why he did not make known to her what he intended doing. He answered: "I have told you all." The Saint replied: "Sit down, brother, and listen to my words. You are much tempted by the devil, and are already thinking of quitting the Order which you have selected." Although he blushed at her remarks, he seemed at first disposed to deny what she attributed to him; but being checked by the Saint and convinced that she knew, he admitted all, grew repentant of his intention, and made a firm resolution to persevere to the end in the Order which he had entered. Father Francis, the brother of St. Clare, had been sent by his superiors to some place far away from his home. False charges were there made against him to his superiors, and he was imprisoned, but freed after three days' confinement. Though the distance was very great, Clare knew of his imprisonment and liberation, and the time of both the one and the other, at the very instant they took place, and told the religious of her convent about them. As she was once rapt in ecstasy, she was heard by her nuns to cry out: "Fly, Brother James! Fly, Brother Thomas!" When she returned to herself the nuns asked her what was the meaning of her crying out thus and naming those two religious. She

answered: "Know that both these religious have been basely betrayed by some bad men in the convent of Colfiorito." It was afterwards learned that the facts were exactly as she stated.

God was still further pleased to reveal to His beloved servant the state of many souls that had passed from this life. Clare was still living in the hermitage, and of the tenderest age, when a certain Mascio of Pazzi came to Blessed Johanna to consult her on a question. He wished to know if he were obliged to execute the will of his dead wife. Before she gave an answer, Blessed Johanna told her sister to have recourse to prayer for light. Clare obeyed willingly, and as she prayed the dead woman appeared to her enveloped in flames, imploring her to pray for her and to see that her pious legacies were carried out. This was done on account of the revelation made to our Saint. Some years afterwards Blessed Johanna herself died, and Clare had the great consolation of seeing the soul of her beloved sister ascend to heaven three days after her precious death. A little later on, the soul of Sister Andriola appeared to her at the very moment when she was ascending from purgatory to heaven in company with other holy virgins, and thanked her for the care she had shown for her eternal salvation. That Pucciarello who had been a persecutor of her convent, and who was converted through the influence of Clare, appeared to her after death to ask her for her efficacious aid in the other life also, and obtained it. Another time Clare saw Jesus Christ as it were in the act of condemning a certain Cetto of Spoleto to eternal death. It seemed to her that she interposed her tears and prayers, and the Sovereign Judge commuted the sentence into one of long exile in purgatory. It was only on the following day that word came that Cetto was dead, and the Saint hastened to recommend his soul to the prayers of her community. It was still further noticed that she seemed to be aware of the state of the holy souls in purgatory; and

on Fridays in the chapters she was wont to recommend, sometimes a departed Sister, sometimes a benefactor, to the prayers of the religious, or else she invited them to praise and thank God for the happy transition of some soul to the state of everlasting happiness.

In virtue of the same heavenly spirit, Clare was able to discover the many snares laid for herself and her convent by the demons. By this gift she saw how her soul was made the target of the infernal shafts, and she recognized the Prince of Darkness, though disguised as the Saviour Himself, when he strove to lead her into the heresy of the Beghards. She foresaw the assault which the tempter was preparing to make on her companion, Sister Johanna Aegidia; wherefore, that she might not succumb, she exhorted her to come and live in the same cell with herself for the six months during which the temptation lasted. Sister Johanna obeyed, and soon saw how wise was the precaution of Clare; for she no sooner went forth from the cell of the Saint than the temptations assaulted her, and left her the moment she re-entered. At the end of six months they left her altogether. This event occurred during the last years of Clare's life, at a time when she was grievously suffering, not only from extreme and almost uninterrupted bodily infirmities, but also from the fierce assaults of the demon. About the same time the nuns were one day engaged in prayer, when they were frightened by a terrible noise at the convent-gate. The Saint recognized this as an effort of the Evil One to disturb them at their prayers, and told them they had nothing to fear. When they examined the place afterwards, nothing could be seen; but the encouraging words of their Abbess allayed their fears. A like occurrence took place shortly after, about midnight; and this time the Saint recognized the infernal enemy from her sick-bed and told the infirmarian. The latter, however, was incredulous and went to the door, but soon returned ice-cold and shivering with terror. Many other

apparitions of the Evil One and wiles employed by him against the Saint are recorded, all of which were discovered and made fruitless by her precautions; but we pass them over as being of little use. We merely remark that Clare always employed her gift of penetration, and indeed all her other gifts, for the sole purpose of preserving herself and her religious against falling into sin; and in this way she greatly facilitated their advance along the path of virtue.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Visions and Ecstasies of St. Clare.

"BLESSED are the peacemakers; for they shall be called children of God. Blessed are the clean of heart; for they shall see God." So spoke our divine Redeemer in His Sermon on the Mount. Moses had a clean heart and was the mildest of men; therefore did he merit to see God as far as man can see Him while in this world and without the light of glory, and also to be admitted to friendly converse with the Divine Majesty itself. After him many holy prophets held communications with the Divinity and had visions, for which reason they were called *Seers*. But in the law of grace innumerable are the saints with whom God has been pleased to hold communication in this manner; and amongst these our Saint holds a distinguished place. We have already shown how great was her meekness during the whole course of her life, the end of which we are now rapidly nearing; and we have especially admired this virtue in her when speaking of her charity, her patience, and her fortitude in the midst of trials, contradictions, persecutions, and infirmities. Her singular purity of heart, too, has been sufficiently established; for we have seen that from her very childhood she never deviated from the pure path of

sanctity. We shall here remark, merely in a passing way, that her purity was so great, that the fifteen confessors who were her spiritual guides during her entire life, and who thoroughly knew the state of her conscience, attested that they had never found in her a grave fault. And the most learned of them affirmed that in a general confession which she made to him he could see nothing but one constant act of perfect charity. To see the truth of this we need only call to mind the rigorous penances she imposed on herself for having once accidentally looked on the face of a man, and for having broken silence by speaking with her mother when she was only a child. So great was the horror which she entertained for even the slightest offence against God, that she apprehended sin even in involuntary things, and deplored them as though they were grave defects. It was to guard against sin that she directed her great macerations of her flesh and her uninterrupted prayers.

Among the many great gifts which God bestowed on the Saint, her gift of prayer was remarkable. This gift, though hidden, is more important than any other gratuitous gift, because it is the immediate vehicle of all the divine communications. We have already spoken of those prodigies of divine love, those internal impulses and sweet fragrances from heaven, which attracted her to the church of St. John the Baptist and to the hermitage of her sister. We have likewise spoken of the apparitions which she had in her early years, and of the consolations which her pure soul enjoyed up to the twentieth year of her age. Even during the eleven years of her interior struggle her loving divine Spouse was wont to comfort her with visions from heaven; and, on occasion of her morning prayers, she was frequently rapt in ecstasy, so that she remained for a long time insensible to all earthly things. These ecstasies usually came upon her after receiving Holy Communion or after hearing Mass, and sometimes lasted an hour, but oftener two

hours. This continued during the whole course of her eleven years of spiritual dryness, and during the nine years of her recovered peace. Sometimes they lasted for days, nay, months, with the exception of those few hours which were necessary for the fulfilment of her external duties. Whenever those ecstasies, which deprived her of the use of her senses, lasted so long, the religious, fearing lest she should die for lack of nourishment, were accustomed to put in her mouth some nutritive liquid; but of this she never partook. Her appearance varied on these occasions; for at times her countenance wore a mortal paleness, but it was usually so joyful and resplendent that the nuns took delight in contemplating it.

When she made her profession of the rule of Holy Father Augustine, Jesus appeared to her in the form of a youth of surpassing beauty, and taking a wreath of flowers from His own head He placed it on hers, as a symbol of the new espousals she contracted with Him by her profession. But the greatest of all these divine communications, at least in point of duration, was that which commenced on the feast of St. John the Evangelist, towards the end of the following year, and lasted almost continuously for four successive months. On that day she was with her Sisters in the oratory when it occurred to her to speak to them on the great mystery of the Incarnation. She commenced to speak, but suddenly stopped and went away with a joyful and smiling countenance to a remote cell, where, languishing with love, she abandoned herself to the sublime contemplation of that ineffable mystery, swooned away, and finally fell into a perfect ecstasy. In this state the nuns found her; but they did not like to disturb her mystic slumber for some hours, till at last, when the night was well advanced, they deemed it advisable to carry her to her own bed. The Saint then spoke, and showed that she had returned to her senses, but to senses that seemed dead to all

earthly things and alive only to the things of God. She remained in this state almost till the month of May, so that whenever heavenly things were spoken of in her presence she instantly became ecstatic and immovable. The nuns, fearing lest she should die while in that state, resolved not to mention these subjects any more in her hearing. They also requested some children who were in the habit of singing hymns in the neighborhood of the convent to desist, as their singing produced a like effect on her. Her ecstasies were of longest duration on the feasts of Our Lord, of the Blessed Virgin, and of those saints whom she honored as patrons. They usually commenced some days before the feast and continued with rare intermissions for some days after. She fell into an ecstasy once on Christmas Day, and remained so long in it that the Sisters, fearing she would die, thought to bring her to herself by cutting her hair very close. Sister Mathiola, whilst performing the operation, inadvertently cut the Saint's ear, but she was wholly insensible to it. And how many times was she not entranced when she heard discourses on God, the passion, or suchlike subjects! Before Sister Catherine had become a religious, she had a conversation on the passion one day with the Saint; the very mention of the subject was enough to cause her to lose her senses, so that she had to be carried away by the nuns from the speaking-grate, whilst Catherine thought she was dead. One day that Father Paul put to her in the confessional a question which called to her mind the pure love of God, she had scarcely answered the question when she swooned away from the effects of that very love. Margaret of Carcasonne, whose name we mentioned before, and who had several times held spiritual conferences with Clare, affirmed that she always saw her close the conversation in raptures and with a shining countenance. An ecstasy of considerable length was that into which she fell on the feast of the Epiphany and which lasted till the feast

of the Purification. The occasion of it was a feeling of the most profound humility which she experienced, and which made her deem herself the vilest and most ungrateful of creatures, and capable of every crime, so that she loudly begged God for mercy. This moved God to call her in a vision before His judgment-seat, where He showed her the rigor of His judgments. Clare obtained here a full knowledge of all her defects, as also of her good works, in which, however, she saw nothing but imperfection, a circumstance which filled her soul with terror. She also saw a wretched soul dragged amidst the horrible howlings of the devils into the depths of hell. She was then called to the contemplation of the glory of the Saints. This she saw under the figure of a city which lay upon a high mountain, and in which God dwelt with His elect. From this city issued forth splendors that irradiated the entire mountain and reached even to herself, so that she understood more clearly than ever the surpassing beauty of virtue. She heard there angelic melodies and a voice which said: "You shall come hither, but you have yet fifteen days to wait." The Saint understood by this that she had yet fifteen years to live.

Finally, on the feast of the Purification, God sent her a heavenly manna which strengthened her; and thus ended that long ecstasy, which, however, appeared to her quite short. In the following year, on the recurrence of the feast of the Nativity, the Saint fell into an ecstasy after Mass, and was heard to exclaim: "Let us all ascend!" When she returned to herself she said in confidence to Sister Agnes that God had made Himself known to her in a special manner through His creatures, and had thereby filled her heart with a wonderful sweetness. The year after, as she was preparing herself, according to her custom through the entire Advent, to receive the Infant Jesus, she was rapt in ecstasy every night, and saw while in that state some explanation of

the profound mystery of the Incarnation. She was taught the prophecies which preceded it, the manner in which it took place, and the benefits which flowed from it. When Christmas again returned, she had a still more extraordinary vision. She saw in the midst of a broad and brightly illuminated street, which led even to the throne of the Eternal, the stable of Bethlehem, and the Child Jesus within, lying on some hay and receiving the adoration of His Virgin Mother and St. Joseph. She saw likewise a multitude of angels descending from Heaven and chanting the song of praise, "Glory to God in the highest," which they sang for the first time at the birth of the world's Redeemer; and when she herself was invited to take part in the chorus, she joined her voice to the angelic melodies. The truth of this fact is testified to by Sister Aegidia, who, astonished at the sweetness of the Saint's song, begged her to explain it, and obtained what she sought.

It is something wonderful that the Saint enjoyed these ecstasies, these clear, supernatural visions, during the eleven years of her dark spiritual dryness. But it was when the years of this sad, gloomy conflict had ended that God wished to give her a foretaste of the reward due to her great victories by bestowing on her the gift of prayer in its most elevated form. It was then that her soul rushed, as it were, to the bosom of its God; saw, as in a mirror of the clearest crystal, His infinite perfection, His greatness, and His profound mysteries; understood clearly the expressive language in which He communicates Himself to holy souls; and experienced the fond caresses of divine love with such sweetness that she seemed absorbed in an ocean of heavenly delights. It is not to be wondered at that during those last nine years of her life, in which the soul of Clare tended serenely towards Heaven, raised above itself and closely united to God, despite the annoyance of the demon and her maladies, the divine communications became so

familiar to her. Let us cast a hasty glance at the little which has been handed down to posterity on this matter. In the second year after the recovery of her peace of soul she was raised to such a high degree of vision that she buried herself, as it were, in the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. She saw this mystery within herself, and herself in it, and rejoiced with an unspeakable, heavenly joy. Her beautiful soul longed just then to shake off the fetters and weight of its mortal body, which it abandoned to such a degree that that body remained immovable for days. It was thought that this was a natural infirmity, and the physicians were summoned; but they, struck by the novelty of the case, after a serious examination, and finding that every effort to restore her to consciousness was useless, were obliged to confess that her insensibility did not proceed from natural causes. One day among others the nuns led her to an open place to give her some relief; but Clare, after thanking them for their kindness, begged them to bring her back to her cell. Scarcely had she entered there and been placed on her bed when suddenly, as though she had been introduced by the Spouse of the Canticles into His mystic wine-cellar, filled more than ever with divine love, she broke forth amid unusual movements and extraordinary joy into the expression: "Let me go, let me go; and do Thou lead me with Thee!" When she was placed sitting up in bed she said: "Everything is on fire with the love of God; and you, Sisters, what are you doing?" She then commenced to sing sweetly some loving and devout words, and was heard to discourse with the Madonna and the saints as though they were present at her bedside. On the feast of the holy apostles Peter and Paul, five years before her death, as she was meditating on the many imperfections of her whole life, she felt great sorrow for them, and then approached the altar to receive Holy Communion. After receiving she fell as usual into an ecstasy, and then had the following vision. She saw

the divine holiness represented under the symbol of a tree which was absolutely devoid of crookedness and against which she was leaning. She saw also the divine immensity, in which she saw herself in God and God in herself. At that instant she seemed to herself to have received from God the gift of equanimity, or evenness of soul, whereby she was able to remain the same in every event, unchanged amid honors and disgrace, for she saw clearly her own nothingness in comparison with God's greatness. During the apparition the Sisters heard her discoursing as though she were inebriated with heavenly delights.* On Christmas Day she saw herself

* The fact that St. Clare frequently communicated to her Sisters a knowledge of the extraordinary favors which God bestowed on her is in nowise incompatible with her heroic humility. "The upright friend," says St. Augustine, "conceals nothing; he makes known his soul, as did Christ the mysteries of His Heavenly Father." She gloried in the Lord. It is thus St. Paul in his Epistle to the Corinthians glories in his graces and in his elevation to the third heaven. He says, too, that he labored more than others, but immediately added, "still not I, but the grace of God with me." The Saint was further led to this through a desire to edify her religious and through the impulse of the Holy Ghost. Thus we read in the Acts of the Apostles that Paul and Barnabas made known the conversion of the Gentiles and the miracles which God had wrought through them. St. Bernard related to his brethren what happened to him in his inner life every day, and made known to them the gifts bestowed on him and the relations made to him in order to encourage them to walk with zeal along the path of perfection. St. Francis of Assisi made known to his brethren the *stigmata* he had received and the vision which accompanied the impression of them. St. Hildegarde published in the books which she composed an account of the divine communications made to her, and her writings have received the approbation of Eugene III., Anastasius IV., and Adrian IV. St. Augustine wrote and published an account of his wonderful conversion. These and other examples, which might be easily adduced, prove that a divine impulse moved the Saints to make known, notwithstanding their great humility, their supernatural gifts that others might profit by them. This is especially true of the founders of Religious Orders and of Superiors, who need to give edification to their spiritual children. (*Analecta.*)

standing on a brilliantly illuminated street, from which she could discern the whole world, which seemed to her no bigger than the point of a needle. She also saw her divine Redeemer sitting in Heaven with His feet on the earth, blessing her province and especially her convent, and threatening sinners with chastisement. Another year, likewise on Christmas Day, she saw the Saviour descend from Heaven, approach her, and place himself in her arms. On another occasion she was praying to the Lord to crush the heretics of the time, when she passed from prayer to ecstasy. The Saviour appeared to her clad in a white garment and with His feet uncovered, but made no allusion to her prayer. When she prostrated herself before Him to kiss His feet, Jesus presented them to her, but they were covered with His garment, in order that she might better understand with what purity of soul His sacred Humanity should be loved. Clare kissed His sacred feet in the vision, and then her divine Spouse disappeared after giving her his blessing. It is undoubtedly true that these supernatural apparitions and ecstasies did not constitute the essence of Clare's sanctity, but they were at the same time a furthering cause and an effect of it, and whilst proving it contributed to its adornment.

CHAPTER XXV.

Miracles worked by St. Clare.

ALTHOUGH St. Clare possessed in a high degree the art of turning to the spiritual advancement of her neighbor the miraculous favors which God so lavishly poured upon her during her progress towards perfection, nevertheless these favors tended, by their very nature, to her own personal glorification, and to her greater advancement in virtue. But there is one gift which is more stupendous

than all others and which excites more astonishment amongst men, and that is the gift of miracles. This gift is an emanation of that same divine power that created the universe, tends directly to the establishment of the faith and to the spiritual and temporal welfare of one's neighbor, and is usually accorded by God to an heroic faith. Now, we have already shown in the proper place how heroic was the faith of St. Clare, so that we intend to view it at present only in the stupendous effects which it produced during her life, reserving to ourselves to recount in another chapter the miracles worked by her after death. Sister Thomasia had an extremely severe internal sore in the neck, which threatened to prove mortal in a very short time. Trusting in the merits of Clare, she begged her one day most earnestly to make the sign of the cross upon her neck. The Saint complied with her request, and the sore instantly disappeared and never returned. Sister Johanna Aegidia had arrived at the last stage of consumption and was given over by the physicians. She was a religious of remarkable virtue, and bore a high reputation amongst her companions. As the latter felt deeply afflicted at the rapidly approaching loss of so dear and valued a friend, and saw, moreover, that there was no escape for her save by a miracle, they determined to have recourse to the efficacious intercession of their holy Abbess, and accordingly begged her to pray for Aegidia's restoration to health. Clare was at first somewhat undecided, but finally replied, "I promise to do all that you ask of me, and with so much greater pleasure as I am convinced that Sister Johanna will be of great use to this convent after my death." The Saint then betook herself to prayer, and after a few days Sister Johanna received the favor of a lasting cure. In addition to this the prophecy of Clare was fulfilled; for Johanna succeeded her as Abbess after her death. Sister Lucia Vitali was much annoyed by horrid phantoms, and by that species of diabolical persecution which theolo-

gians call obsession, and which the Lord at times permits in order to test the virtue of certain pious souls. The unhappy Sister had recourse to Clare for help and begged her to pray for her. Her confidence was not misplaced; for Clare embraced her with the most sympathetic charity and covered her with her own cloak, so that she did not suffer afterwards at the hands of the demon.

An oblate of the convent, by name Mascio, had been sent by the Saint to Gubbio, and was overtaken on the way by such a severe rain-storm that he lost his way and found himself in a wood at the approach of night. He was possessed, however, of a full confidence in the sanctity of his beloved Abbess, and turned to her in spirit, though far from her, recommending himself to her prayers and asking for help. Instantly there appeared to him a child of angelic mien, that led him to the right path and afterwards disappeared. Brancina of Montefalco, the mother of Sister Catherine, had a grandson named Vannolo, who was troubled with the falling-sickness. She was advised by her own daughter to bring him to the convent and beg the holy Abbess to make the sign of the cross over him. The advice was followed, and the child was brought to the convent. Brancina then begged Sister Thomasia, the portress, to carry the infant to the Saint that she might make the sign of the cross over him. The Sister hesitated a little at first through fear of being scolded, but finally consented. When she appeared before Clare the latter said to her: "Oh, you bad little creature, may God forgive you!" Then, casting her eyes on the infant, she was moved with pity and placed on its breast a small wooden cross. This was sufficient to work a thorough cure, as was proven from the fact that he never afterwards suffered from the disease. A certain Julian of Montefalco had been suffering for more than a month most severe pains in the foot. These pains proceeded from a sore which quickly developed into a gan-

grene, so that the physicians declared that the only remedy for it was amputation. In the midst of his affliction Julian had recourse to God and begged Him, through the merits of Sister Clare, to cure him or at least render him insensible to the amputation. Shortly after this prayer he fell asleep, and on awakening found himself completely cured, to the great astonishment of his physicians. We pass over several other miraculous favors obtained through the intercession of St. Clare, and shall further mention only two stupendous miracles which she was instrumental in working, namely, the raising of two persons from the dead. Two years before the Saint's happy transition to the joys of paradise, a certain Paganone of Montefalco was buried under a land-slide, while excavating in a sand pit near the convent, and lost his life. A man who witnessed the accident gave the alarm and immediately several persons ran to the place, and amongst them the two lay Sisters Illuminata and Angela. These latter returned quickly to the convent in order to procure shovels with which to remove the earth, and so brought word to the holy Abbess. She instantly assembled her religious, and begged of the Almighty with the liveliest faith and most ardent charity to restore the dead man to life, at least for a length of time sufficient to permit of his receiving the sacraments. After three hours' hard work in removing the enormous mass of earth, the body of Paganone was recovered, but life was completely extinguished. The diggers, in compliance with his wife's wish, carried the body to his own house, instead of to the church as they intended. Whilst the body lay there stretched out upon a table, Clare's prayers pierced the heavens, and the dead man returned to life, to the great astonishment of all present. He then, as if conscious of the little time granted him and of the purpose for which it was granted, asked to see a priest in order to settle the affairs of his soul. After receiving the last sacraments he asked to have a notary called that

he might settle his temporal affairs, and then calmly fell asleep again in the Lord. The other miracle, which is somewhat similar to the one just recorded, happened the year after. Sister Andriola died suddenly after a short illness without having received the last sacraments. As soon as the holy Abbess heard of the Sister's demise she betook herself, although sick, to her cell, and there, standing by the bedside of the departed, said to the nuns: "Let us entreat the Lord to give back life to Andriola for a sufficient space of time to admit of her receiving the last sacraments." She then commenced to pray, and enlivened her prayer with her heroic faith; and behold, Andriola returned to life! She remained alive for the space of three hours, long enough to provide for all the wants of her soul by receiving the sacraments, and then quitted this mortal life for ever without showing any signs of agony. So powerful is the lively faith of the saints!

CHAPTER XXVI.

Last Illness and Death of St. Clare.

IT HAS been remarked in the preceding chapter that the gift of miracles is intended more for the benefit of others than of its possessor. This truth is illustrated in the case of our Saint; for whilst she obtained health for the sick by her intercession, she was herself continually sick; and whilst her prayers were bringing back the dead to life, she could not hinder herself from being offered in the freshness of her years as a victim on the altar of the inexorable destroyer Death. She prepared herself for this with the greatest resignation, happy in the thought that her life might be accepted by God as a propitiatory sacrifice for the sufferings of her neighbor, but doubly happy in the prospect of being able to satisfy her great thirst for suffering, to die with Jesus on the cross, and to be speed-

ily united with Him in the realm of bliss. Amongst the various diseases from which she suffered during her whole life, and especially in her last years, there was one which had become chronic, and that was a pain in the side and in the stomach. When she had reached the age of thirty-eight years this pain had increased to such an extent that she was no longer able to use her feet, and was consequently obliged to remain confined in her humble bed, from which she rose only at rare intervals and for a short time during the last two years of her life. She was happier in this state than others are in the enjoyment of perfect health; for she found there a wide field for the practice of patience, fortitude, humility, and obedience. This latter virtue she exercised in an heroic degree towards her physicians and attendants. In this way she made atonement for her imperfections and increased her merit in the sight of God. With reference to the exact observance of the virtue of obedience she deemed herself justified in making one exception; that was, she never permitted any one to touch her pure, virginal body, but she herself applied all the prescribed remedies. It seemed as though nothing else troubled her save the annoyance which she caused to the good religious that attended her. How can it be imagined that a soul which had been favored with divine communications to such an extraordinary degree during life, and which had remained steadfast in the practice of heroic virtue amid so many trials and temptations till the palm of victory was already almost won, could have borne the sufferings of the last illness otherwise than in perfect conformity to the divine will? But the time when her sufferings were to have an end was already nigh: the last year of Clare's life was speeding on. Still the nuns were all solicitude to prolong her precious days, and called in physicians; others, too, came from different parts, and Cardinals Colonna and Orsini sent their own medical attendants from Rome. Some of these held a

consultation with the attending physician of Montefalco, Signor Simon Giovannoli. The result of this consultation was that remedies were applied which were entirely successful, so that the attending physician was able to give the positive assurance that the Saint had been cured of her corporal malady. He added, however, that he was in doubt as to whether or not she would succumb to the vehemence and frequency of her ecstasies.

In the mean time the seventh of August came, and St. Clare was still confined to her bed, either because her disease had not yet entirely passed away or because it had returned. Of a sudden she fell into an ecstasy and was heard to utter the following words: "My dear Sisters, why do you give yourselves so much trouble about this body of mine? I can remain no longer with you in this world; Heaven expects me." She then raised her eyes and arms to heaven, and continued: "Behold, Holy Father Augustine, St. Francis, and the saints of heaven are calling me!" These words awoke a new fear in the hearts of the religious, lest they should lose their beloved Abbess, who had been to them a strong support in their troubles, and they had recourse again to the physician, begging him to try all possible remedies to save her. He replied: "I have remedies only for natural diseases, and Clare's disease is, as I have told you, not of this sort. If you succeed in stopping her frequent ecstasies she will get well. Endeavor to distract her by conversations on light subjects, and turn away her mind from the contemplation of spiritual things by temporal cares and concerns, and carry her around here and there through the convent on a portable bed." They did as he bade them, and on the following day caused a portable bed to be made, which they instantly brought to the cell of the Saint. The latter on seeing it smiled and said: "The Lord be praised! You have done well, Sisters, in obeying the physician; put me in that bed; I shall not be long in it." The following day, the vigil of St. Law-

rence, the scene changed; for Clare saw appearing in her cell a great number of demons, who endeavored to frighten her by their hideous aspect and cause her to commit sin. She spoke boldly, however, to Sister Johanna, who was present, and said: "What are these persons doing here? Send them away." Sister Johanna wished then to mark her with the sign of the cross, but Clare said: "My dear, why do you make the sign of the cross upon me? I have Jesus Christ crucified in my heart. You do well, nevertheless." The feast of St. Lawrence was for Clare a real feast-day; for she spent it wholly raised above herself and absorbed in God; and though the Sisters endeavored in various ways to distract her she was nevertheless insensible to everything. On this day she said, turning to Sister Johanna: "Let us all rejoice and sing the *Te Deum laudamus.*" She then broke forth into a chant which was more angelic than human, and sweetly exclaimed, as she finished this hymn of thanks: "Jesus Christ wishes me to be with Himself; Heaven is expecting me and is preparing to receive me. I would wish to invite the whole world to this truly magnificent nuptial-feast. O brotherhood of the saints, how desirable thou art!" In these and such-like ejaculations she spent the greater portion of that day. She was likewise heard to converse with the saints in terms of confiding affection, just as friend is wont to speak with friend. She then began to utter the most sublime thoughts on the mystery of the Holy Trinity, whilst her body was agitated with violent motions. Sister Johanna thought she was suffering from a fresh attack of the pain in her side, and quickly sought to apply the prescribed ointment; but the Saint stopped her, saying: "What do you wish to do with that ointment? Do you suppose that I am suffering from the pain in the side? I do not feel it at all at present, Sister." When these movements had ceased, Clare composed herself that she might enjoy a little rest; but behold! the Demon appeared to her that he might make

a last effort to subdue her invincible soul. He strove to seduce her by promises of health, pleasures, riches, and honors; but she, animated by her strong faith, chased him away with these decisive words: "I care not," she answered him, "either for what you give or for what you take away. Five thousand years ago and more you were cursed by God. I, too, curse you. Away from me, Satan!"

Sister Johanna, who heard these words, asked her if she was afraid. "Of whom should I be afraid," replied Clare, "since I have my crucified Jesus within my heart?" She repeated these words in the presence of Sister Thomasia, who made the sign of the cross over her and encouraged her not to be afraid. Towards evening of the same day she dismissed the other Sisters, keeping with her only Sister Johanna. She was then heard to sing songs of indescribable sweetness, and to utter harmonious ejaculations, sighing after her heavenly country and her Jesus, the only object of her heart's affections. She afterwards turned to Sister Johanna and said: "Jesus Christ, the friend of my soul, has told me that I must depart hence and come to Him; and my soul, inflamed with love for Him, can no longer remain in this world with you." This absorption of the Saint's mind in the contemplation of the glory of paradise lasted for five days; that is to say, from the feast of St. Lawrence to that of the Assumption of our Blessed Lady; and during that time a circumstance occurred which deserves mention. Sister Agnes brought to the cell of the Saint the cross which the latter had received as a present from Cardinal James Colonna. Clare asked her why she brought it there, and the Sister answered that she had done so because it contained so many relics which she already knew. Thereupon the Saint replied: "My sister, this cross is not in a fitting place here, and it is not necessary for me; for I hold my crucified Jesus within my heart." During these five days she repeated

the assurance fully five times that she bore the Crucified in her heart; and it was noticed that when she pronounced these words, "in my heart," or "within me," she always accompanied them with a modulation of extraordinary affection. The morning of the feast of the Assumption came, and the Saint had her confessor brought to her, and made to him her last sacramental confession with such sorrow and weeping that he himself wept. She then begged him to bring her the holy Viaticum, being certain, as she herself predicted and as really happened, that she would never again receive it in this life. Her wish was instantly complied with; but who can sufficiently describe the feelings, the affections, the upward boundings of her seraphic heart in this her last sacramental communion? After receiving the Blessed Sacrament, she wished to be left alone for a long time, in order that no earthly object might rob her of a glance or a thought, and that she might give free vent to the current of her affections. Towards evening she caused the religious to be assembled round her, and delivered to them a brief but efficacious ascetic discourse, exhorting them to regular observance and to the acquisition of perfection, finishing with the following words: "My beloved daughters and dearest Sisters, I offer up my life in union with the death of my Lord Jesus Christ. May you be all blessed of God even as I bless you! As the Lord calls me to eternal rest, I resign you all to His mercy. Blessed be all the pains which it has been His will that I should bear for your sake! I beg of you, my daughters, to conduct yourselves well. Be humble in heart, in word, in work; be obedient to her who will hold the position of superior after me; be patient in adversity; be united in charity; and act so that the Lord our God may be praised in you, and that the work which His mercy has wrought in you may not perish through your own fault." She then raised her hand, and with the sign of the cross gave them her ma-

ternal benediction. She afterwards sent for her confessor, asked him for Extreme Unction, and received it amidst the tears of her spiritual daughters with sentiments becoming a saint. On the following day she requested to be carried to the oratory, that she might resign her spirit into the hands of God in that very place in which she had received so many heavenly favors. She had scarcely arrived there when her soul was so absorbed in the contemplation of heavenly things that she spent almost the entire day in a friendly conversation with the angels and saints on the unspeakable joys of paradise. She was heard to exclaim: "Bear me hence! Bear me hence! And tell the Blessed Virgin Mary to receive my soul in peace." The physician who was present asked her whither she wished to be brought, and she answered: "To my Lord." The nuns strove, by the advice of the physician, to divert her thoughts by speaking with her and stirring her up. When the Saint noticed this she said: "What do I say that displeases you? Do you believe, my daughters, that my thoughts are on the subjects of your conversation? They certainly are not." After a short time the Lord enwrapped her in a fresh ecstasy, and showed her the degree of glory destined for her. In a sudden transport of exuberant joy she strove to raise herself from her bed, and burst forth into the exclamation: "O Paradise, thou art too beautiful! O Lord, this reward is too great!" She afterwards returned to the use of her senses and begged the nuns to recite for her the Divine Office, in order that the Lord might pardon her the faults she had committed in the recitation of the same Office. Father Francis, her brother, whom the Saint had sent for early in the morning, arrived towards sunset of the same day at Montefalco from Spoleto. On his arrival Clare had herself brought on her bed to the door of the convent; and, among other things, said to him: "Brother, I wish that you be satisfied with the will of

God. I recommend to you this convent; for I know that it will have need of your help after my death. But, as it is already late, go to your convent and return here to-morrow early, and bring our confessor along with you." Father Francis departed in tears, and the Saint was carried back to the oratory, where she passed the night in uninterrupted union with God. Before day-break she was heard to repeat several times in presence of the Sisters: "I wish to go to my God." Then, turning to Sister Johanna, she added: "I can be with you no longer. Behold, my God calls me to Himself! Be in peace; I desire to go to Him; I recommend to you these Sisters." Having said this, she rested, or at least seemed to rest, for about an hour. The physician returned in the morning, and found the Saint with every appearance of health; and he assured Father Francis and the father confessor, whom he met on his way home from the convent, that the Mother Abbess was cured, because during the whole course of her illness he had never noticed such favorable symptoms as on that morning. On hearing this welcome news the two religious were on the point of returning to their own monastery, when they were overtaken by two lay Sisters whom the Saint had sent, requesting them to repair without delay to the convent. They did as requested, and had the consolation to find Clare no longer lying in bed, but sitting up. She immediately addressed her brother, and spoke with a strength of soul which overcame the weakness of her body, recommending him with earnest and forcible arguments to practise virtue and aim after evangelical perfection, so that he might lead a holy life and be an example to others. When she had finished this exhortation the two religious went away and the nuns entered. Clare gave to them likewise new and holy advice, and again imparted to them her blessing. When the Sisters looked upon the joyful countenance of their holy Abbess and listened to her clear and distinct voice,

they could not persuade themselves that her death was so near.

Father Francis and her confessor returned soon after; and when the former saw his sister sitting up in bed, with her countenance wearing an expression of joy and health, he felt greatly relieved, and said to her: "Rejoice! you are cured." The Saint answered him, smiling: "Yes, truly; I am now cured of all my infirmities, and my crucified Jesus knows it." Having said this, she turned to her confessor and said: "Father, I accuse myself of all the faults that I have committed during my whole life, and I ask pardon for them from the goodness of my Lord." She was silent for a moment, and then, raising her eyes to Heaven, and hearing the final summons of her heavenly Bridegroom, she uttered her last words: "Remain you all in union with God to whom I now go." She remained thus with her eyes upturned for some time, and the spectators saw descending swiftly from on high a brilliant light which irradiated her entire countenance. They were astonished at the vision, and felt within themselves a sentiment of terror mingled with joy. The light shortly afterwards took the form of a globe and disappeared, and with it departed the fair soul of Clare, to enter into the haven of everlasting happiness. No one perceived at first that her soul had really departed, nor did her body show the least sign of being lifeless. The physician himself, who arrived just then, was for a long time deceived, and thought, as he looked upon her fair body, which was still so fresh and limber and in a sitting posture, with the eyes raised towards Heaven and the countenance beaming with joy, that the Saint had fallen into one of her usual ecstasies. He found out his mistake only after repeated experiments, and then told those present that Clare was really dead. At this announcement the assembled religious shed streams of tears over their great and irreparable loss. But their grief was softened when

they looked upon her countenance which beamed with happiness, and thought upon that sovereign Good which they knew their beloved Mother was at that moment enjoying. They knew that she had passed from them into the bosom of God, to be their advocate with Him in the kingdom of His glory. And now her trials, her labors, her sufferings, her combats are at an end; her triumph is complete; and her virtue and sanctity have received their crown. She died during the pontificate of Clement V., in the forenoon of Saturday, August 17, in the year of Our Lord 1308, and in the fortieth year of her age.

CHAPTER XXVII.

On the Glory with which God honored St. Clare after Death.

LTHOUGH the body of St. Clare lies cold and immovable, still it can be said in a certain sense that she still lives, or rather that her death is but a sleep. She lives in the incorruptibility of her remains, in the veneration paid her by the faithful, and in the working of so many miracles. If, according to the saying of the Holy Ghost, the just that are dead sleep in the dust of the earth to awake unto everlasting life, with how much greater reason may not this be said of Clare, who was eminently holy and just, and whose body, though immovable, is still fresh and uncorrupted after the lapse of many centuries, and like that of one who is calmly reposing, so that the spectator would be deceived by its appearance? Those who were present were scarcely convinced of her death, when the news spread through the entire town, and quickly penetrated to every village and hamlet of the surrounding country. Every one said that a saint was dead. God was furthermore pleased to manifest in a supernatural manner to certain pious persons not only the death, but also the glory, of His servant. A nun of

Spoleto, by name Bartoluccia, saw at the very hour at which the Saint died the Blessed Virgin Mary, accompanied by a throng of heavenly spirits, coming to meet the soul of Clare, to unite it to her own train and lead it to the glory of Heaven. Another religious, an abbess, likewise of Spoleto, by name Sister Paula, saw at the hour above mentioned a soul hovering in the air surrounded with surpassing splendor, and at the same time heard a voice saying: "This is Clare of the Cross, who is just going to eternal life." A certain Sister Cecilia, an abbess in Perugia, who had a great affection for our Saint while she was still in life, saw one day, as she was engaged in prayer with her nuns, a great light, whose sudden and unaccountable appearance caused all present to be astonished. At the same instant God gave the abbess to understand that Clare had departed to Heaven, and that the light they saw was a symbol of her actual glory. When she learned this she exclaimed: "Sisters, let us rejoice in the Lord, for our Clare of Montefalco has passed to the glory of paradise." Another pious religious of Colfiorito had a like supernatural intimation of the happy death of the Saint, as had also the devout Beatrice of Ugolino. In addition to these, the Saint herself appeared to many persons who practised devotion towards her. The account of these apparitions can be found in other biographies of St. Clare. We pass them over for the sake of brevity.

Whilst the report of St. Clare's death was being spread far and wide, the nuns were keeping watch at the bier of their dead Abbess in sadness and devotion, and were considering in what way they could give an honorable and distinctive burial to her remains. One amongst them expressed the view that a body which had been the companion of so holy a soul and the living temple of the Holy Ghost should be embalmed. Her view was unanimously adopted. Now it was necessary for this operation that the body should be cut open, and Clare's

pure virginal flesh had never been touched by the hand of man while she lived. In order, therefore, that the same could be said of her after death, they agreed that one of themselves should cut open the blessed remains. As they were deliberating to whose lot the task would fall, Sister Frances Ermanni of Foligno volunteered to perform the operation. On the night of the same Saturday this Sister cut open the body with the assistance of Sisters Helen and Illuminata. In separating the entrails she noticed that the envelope of the gall was white. She felt it with her hand, and found, to her great astonishment, that it contained, as we have already mentioned, three small round and hard objects, arranged in the shape of a triangle. She immediately communicated this remarkable circumstance to the two Sisters who were helping her. She then took the heart in her hand, and she and the other two Sisters were astonished at its extraordinary size. They deemed it advisable to lay it aside in a wooden dish, which they locked up in a chest for greater security. The other entrails were placed in an earthen vessel and buried in the same oratory in which the Saint died, alongside the altar, in which place it is believed that they still rest.

The solemn burial services were to take place on the following day, which was Sunday. A great multitude of people had assembled from the town and the neighboring villages and country in order to see the blessed remains of St. Clare, to obtain some relics of her, and to assist at her funeral. The clergy likewise came, and the magistrates of the town. The sacred offices commenced, and the holy Sacrifice of the Mass was offered, if not for the repose of her soul, at least to render her due honors. When the funeral services were over, the nuns were not able to bury the body on account of the great number of persons that came to venerate it and to touch it with rosary-beads, pictures, and such like. They were consequently obliged to leave it exposed during the whole of

the following day and for the forenoon of Tuesday. It was therefore exposed for three whole days; the first day in the convent chapel, and the two other days in the public church. Her angelic countenance was at last taken away from the gaze of the people, and her body, enclosed in a fitting coffin, was buried in an honorable place. It was in this way that Heaven and earth united to do honor to her who despised the glory of the world, and whose life was hidden with Jesus Christ in God.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

Discovery of the Emblems of the Holy Mysteries of the Passion of Jesus in the Heart of St. Clare, and of the Symbol of the Holy Trinity in her Gall.

WE HAVE now come to the point where we can verify what we remarked in the twentieth chapter concerning the impression of the instruments of Christ's passion on the heart of St. Clare, and the three pellets found in her gall, which were a symbol of the Holy Trinity. This brings us back again to the operation of opening her body performed by the Sisters. The nuns who were present at this operation seeing the extraordinary size of Clare's heart, and believing that this was not without some meaning, acquainted all the other Sisters of the matter. They gave the subject serious consideration, calling to mind the fact that the Saint had often remarked during her last illness that she bore her crucified Jesus in her heart. Sister Marina likewise reminded them that she had heard from the mouth of the Saint herself, seven years before, that the Redeemer had appeared to her in the guise of a pilgrim, bearing a cross on His shoulders, and said to her that He wished to plant it in her heart. Considering these things, they formed the resolution of opening the heart and embalming it, even though nothing miraculous

should be found in it. We narrate this matter just as it is recorded by Piergigli, who gives a most exact and minute account of it, and whom I intend to follow in all I have to say.

The same Sister Frances who had opened the body the day before undertook the task of cutting open the heart in the presence of Sisters Lucy, Catherine, and Margaret, who had been assigned to her both as assistants and witnesses. The chest in which the heart was locked up was accordingly opened, and the Sisters knelt in reverence before it. Sister Frances then took the heart in her hand, and cut it open with a razor. Nothing was at first seen, on account of the great quantity of blood; but Sister Frances felt with her finger that a tendon extended through the centre of the heart. She severed this tendon, and all saw, to their great astonishment, the figure of the Crucified, formed in flesh and intersected with veins, lying in a cavity which itself was in the shape of a cross. Sister Margaret, on seeing this, commenced to cry out, "Miracle!" and by her cries attracted all the other nuns to the spot. They, too, admired the work of God, and raised their voices in praise of the Lord and of His Saint. When Sister Johanna had recovered from her astonishment she told Sister Frances that it would be well to institute a more careful examination of the heart—a suggestion which was instantly carried out. This examination resulted in finding another tendon formed likewise on the inner wall of the heart. Observing this carefully, they found that it was exactly alike in shape to the lash with which Jesus was scourged at the pillar. At this sight their astonishment grew greater, and they gave fresh praise to God, the worker of such miracles. They made no further examination that night, intending to institute a more careful investigation on the following day. In the mean time they collected the blood in a bottle and locked it up along with the heart in the same chest as before. On

the following morning the fame of the miracle was spread through Montefalco, and the mayor of the city, who was a nobleman of the family of Giliberti, came to the convent of the Holy Cross together with his chancellor, the physician of the convent, and the Father Guardian of the Franciscan convent of Foligno, who happened to be in Montefalco. When they arrived there, they were told by the nuns of the discovery of the sacred emblems, and the heart was shown them, together with the figures of the crucified Redeemer and the scourge. After a close examination they all agreed that the work was of God, and they concluded to send an account of the matter to the bishop of Spoleto. This was done on the same day. But the Demon, who was jealous of the glory of the Saint, sought to interfere with the work. To accomplish his designs, he suggested to a certain Fra Pietro, an adherent of the impious sect of the Fraticelli, heretics who understood well how to conceal their heresy, to go to Spoleto and persuade the vicar-general that what was said of St. Clare's sanctity and of the miraculous emblems found in her heart was false. He repaired thither the same day, Monday, and argued his cause so artfully that the vicar-general thanked him, and formed the resolution, with the consent of the bishop, of going instantly to Montefalco, in order to crush the novelty and punish the nuns for the alleged imposture. There is no counsel, however, nor power against God, who knows how to make use of the wickedness of men to further His own designs. Berengarius Donadei—such was the vicar-general's name—was quite zealous in the cause which he had undertaken, and came to Montefalco on the following day. Having arrived there, he called together the most distinguished persons of the place, the parish priests, the religious, both Augustinians and Franciscans, theologians, and doctors in law and in medicine. To these were added Monsignor Tignosi, of Rome, Cavalier Theodoric, of Orvieto, and Judge Bartholomew, of Perugia. With

these he repaired to the convent, or rather to the inner oratory of the same. Having called the nuns together there, he gave them a solemn reprimand, accusing them of being rash, of having put in peril the honor of the bishop and of the Catholic faith itself, and threatened them with punishment. The religious endeavored to justify themselves; but their best justification was to present to him the heart of St. Clare, so that he himself might examine it and pass judgment on it. He refused disdainfully at first to look at it, but afterwards consented; and what was his astonishment to see for himself, the figures of the Crucified and the scourge! But what heightened his astonishment and added greater lustre to the triumph of the truth was that he himself and those with him discovered by their critical examination other emblems of the mysteries of the passion; that is to say, the pillar, the crown of thorns, the three nails, the lance, and the reed with the sponge. These were represented with such realistic effect that the vicar-general, in touching the point of the lance and of the nails, was pierced by them as though they were of iron. They were so astonished that words failed them to express their thoughts, and, struck with the greatness of the prodigy, they confessed that it was the work of the Almighty. Berengarius himself changed his disdain into veneration and love, gave due praise to God, bore testimony to the truth and to the sanctity of Clare, and devoutly recommended himself to her intercession. All who were present instantly did the same. It was the opinion of the eminent persons present that publication should be given to those miracles for the glory of God. The vicar was of the same mind, and agreed that the people should be assembled to celebrate by public demonstrations the praises of God for the signal favors granted to the Saint.

Before going away the vicar-general wished to proceed to the election of a new abbess. Sister Johanna Aegidia,

who was a cousin of the Saint and an ardent imitator of her virtues, was elected. He also desired to obtain, before his departure, reliable information concerning the holy life led by St. Clare; and after receiving incontrovertible testimony regarding her extraordinary merits, he resolved to institute without delay the process for her canonization. This he did within a short time, as we shall soon mention.

But as we are treating here of an extraordinary privilege, and one that is unique in its kind, we hope not to weary the devout reader if we give a more minute description of the different instruments of the passion which were found in the heart of St. Clare. We have already remarked that the heart was noticed to be of extraordinary size—as large as the head of a new-born infant—and that it was divided into two parts, which were united only in the circumference. The figure of the Crucified was found in the right side of the heart, and that of the scourge in the centre of the left; between both was the pillar, and at its foot the crown of thorns; at the right side of the figure of the Crucified were the three nails, and under them the lance; and at the left side of the same was the reed with the sponge. They were made partly of fleshy matter and partly of muscular tissue, and impressed on the walls of the cavity in bas-relief with such skill, that when extracted they left the cavity smooth and without the least trace of laceration. Every part of the body could be clearly distinguished in the figure of the Saviour, which was of a pale white color, with the exception of the wound in the side, which was of a livid hue approaching to red. There was likewise discernible something which looked like a fine linen cloth, bound round the loins of the Saviour and attached to the lateral walls of the Saint's heart. It is also worthy of observation that the figure of the Redeemer was detached from the flesh and united to the heart merely by a slender filament. The scourge was of hard muscular

tissue, thicker at both extremities than in the middle. At the lower extremity there was a band, which was somewhat broad but of fine texture, which represented the noose of the handle, serving at the same time to unite the scourge itself to the flesh from which it was otherwise detached. From the upper extremity of the scourge there extended five little nerves, closely intertwined, each one of which terminated in a small knot. These were of a livid hue, inclining to red, but the handle itself was white. The pillar, too, was of very hard muscular tissue, round in the middle, and joined to the flesh of the heart only in the base and summit by means of a few slender fibres. Around it ran another small nerve, which was thought to represent the cord with which the Redeemer was bound to the pillar. The crown of thorns was represented by black interlaced nerves, from which other shorter ones stuck out, which were of a livid hue and exactly resembled thorns. This crown was joined to the flesh. The three nails were represented by three little nerves of a dark color, which hung from three fleshy threads, with this difference: that one which was longer was suspended, apart from the others, from a longer thread, and the other two, which were quite close to each other and of equal size, were suspended from shorter threads. The nerve which bore the figure of the lance was joined with the flesh only at the shaft, and protruded somewhat from its cavity as though it were in the act of striking. Finally, another nerve, which terminated in a group of small white nerves, was believed to represent the reed and sponge, from which the Jews sought to quench the thirst of the dying Jesus with vinegar and gall.

Let us now resume the thread of the narrative. Ater the departure of the vicar-general for Spoleto, the Sisters remembered the declaration of Sister Frances, that she had found three little pellets in the gall of the Saint. They asked their physician, the above-mentioned

Simon Giovannoli, whether this could happen naturally. The physician answered that he would like to examine for himself the quality of these three hard substances. The nuns searched for them amongst the uncorrupted entrails, and presented to him the entire gall-bladder, which had been detached from the liver by Sister Frances. The same Sister cut it open at the request of the physician, and there appeared three little balls of like size, shape, color, and hardness. They were about as large as a hazel-nut, round in shape, of a dark color, as hard as a stone, and arranged so as to form a triangle. In the bladder itself there was no gall. After a close examination the physician was obliged to confess that this could not happen through any natural means, nor in consequence of any sickness, so that it was undoubtedly supernatural and therefore miraculous. When this remarkable discovery was made public, several theologians held a consultation with the afore-mentioned Monsignor Tignosi, and concluded after serious consideration that these pellets were certainly a symbol of the most august Trinity. They were confirmed in their belief when they weighed them some days after and found, not only that all three were of like weight, but also, what was still more wonderful, that any one of them weighed as much as the other two, or even as all three. Holy Father Augustine had already said, speaking of the three Divine Persons in the sixth book of his work on the Trinity: "In the Holy Trinity one is as much as the three together; and two are no more than one object in substance. The whole is in each, and each in the whole, and the whole is but one object in essence." Father Augustine of Montefalco, of the Augustinian Order, was therefore perfectly justified in declaring, in the life of the Saint which he wrote, that the fact which we have just narrated was confirmed by experiment and attested by many writers. Vicar Piergigli, who also wrote her life, bears the same testimony, and adds that in his time the

experiment had been repeated in the presence of thirty persons, who found the matter to be exactly as we have narrated it.

The vicar-general having approved, as we have already remarked, the publication of the symbols found in the heart and gall of the Saint, the people of Montefalco gave themselves up to the liveliest demonstrations of joy. An announcement was made that on the 22d of August these miraculous symbols would be exhibited for the public veneration of the faithful, and a great concourse of people assembled from all parts of Umbria. The exposition took place as announced, and the vast multitude were loud in their praises of God and in their expressions of astonishment at the miracle. Amongst those who came to witness the exposition was the eminent servant of God, Beatrice of Ugolino, whose name we have frequently mentioned. She was unable to enter into the church, by reason of the great throng, and stood outside leaning against a wall and rapt in contemplation. Whilst there she saw in a vision a multitude of holy persons, clad in a variety of garments, moving along in front of St. Clare. The Saint herself was clothed in a beautiful red garment and accompanied by two other saints, who wore garments of a like color. They all moved in procession towards the church of the Holy Cross, as though to indicate that they wished to render the ceremony more solemn by their presence. The vision then disappeared.

There were, however, some incredulous persons who scoffed at the faith of the pious people; but they soon had reason to repent of their incredulity. There was a certain Vivarello of Petriolo, who did not think it worth while to go to the church, but busied himself instead with work in a foundry. On his return home, his wife told him of the wonderful things she had seen in the heart of St. Clare; but he only laughed at her and called her a fool. He returned to his foundry, and there paid the penalty of his unbelief; for a brick, detached by an

invisible hand, fell on him and struck him with such force that he sank to the ground almost lifeless. He then recognized his mistake, and, going on his knees, asked pardon of God and of St. Clare, entreating her to ease his pain, and pledging himself to go and venerate the holy mysteries of her heart. He had scarcely made the vow when he felt as though some one had touched his wounded arm, and the pain instantly ceased.

The vicar-forane wished that a public document should be drawn up, recording the solemnity celebrated in the church on that day, and that the nuns and the physician should swear in the presence of the people that these symbols of the passion and of the Trinity had been found by them in the heart and gall of the Saint. This was done, and the document was drawn upon parchment by the notary Angelo of Giovannello, under date of the 22d of August, 1308—five days after the glorious death of the Saint. This document is preserved to the present day in the archives of the convent at Montefalco. But as the devotion of the faithful, who continued to come in immense crowds, could not be satisfied in one day, the solemnity was kept up for eight consecutive days. Each day there was a sermon, sometimes by an Augustinian, sometimes by a Minorite, on the greatness of the miracle and in praise of Clare's extraordinary sanctity. Manifestations also took place on the part of God in the shape of visions. No less than seven of these, had by devout persons of both sexes, are recorded and minutely described by the biographer whom I have followed in this chapter.

The fame of these wonders reached Rome, and Cardinal James Colonna, the vicar and legate of the Pope, who then resided in Avignon, desired that these mysterious objects should be brought to Rome for examination. He accordingly sent in haste a trustworthy person to Montefalco, and at the same time sent word to the vicar-general of Spoleto and to the nuns of the Holy

Cross to give up without hesitation the heart and symbols to his messenger. In compliance with the cardinal's orders all the objects were handed over to his envoy, after they had been previously enclosed in a box and well sealed. In this way they came into the hands of his Eminence the Vicar. To make the examination as authentic as possible, the cardinal convoked many prelates and other qualified persons, and opened the box in their presence and in that of Cardinal Napoleon Orsini. He then took from it the heart and the three pellets, and commenced a serious examination of them, as the importance of the affair demanded. The conclusion they came to was that the work was of God and not of man; and the cardinals, prelates, and others who were looking on went on their knees and paid homage to the precious relics, and gave praise and thanks to God. There were, however, some present at this examination who suspected imposition, and remarked that these instruments were not similar to those used in the passion of the Redeemer. But the Lord took care of His own honor and that of His servant by the following fact. Amongst the many who were present at this examination was a good and learned religious, who was likewise a famous preacher and theologian to Cardinal Orsini. This man had been suffering for seventeen years from a severe and incurable rupture, as was well known to many of those present. Content to suffer something for love of Jesus, he had never prayed to the Lord for restoration to health. When, however, he heard doubts raised concerning the reality of these wonderful impressions, he threw himself on his knees, and loudly invoked the name of Clare that she might obtain for him the cure of his disease in proof of her sanctity and of the truth of those symbols. He had scarcely finished his short and confident prayer, when he found that his rupture was completely cured. He immediately made known the miracle, and those who were before incredulous were undeceived, whilst the

devotion of the others to our Saint was more and more strengthened. This examination was finished in the month of November of the same year, and the precious emblems were sent back to Montefalco, carefully enclosed and sealed. We shall finish this long chapter with the testimony of an eminent witness, who saw for himself these mysterious symbols some two centuries after the death of the Saint. This witness is none other than the most learned Aegidius of Viterbo,* of the Augustinian Order, and cardinal of the Holy Roman Church. In a letter written by him in Latin to his friend Seraphinus and recorded by Martene, he gives a description of a journey he had made, and says that he wept on seeing the holy house of Loreto, and also when

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* Aegidius Canisius was born at Viterbo in the year 1470, and entered in early youth into the Order of Hermits of St. Augustine. Owing to his unwearied application and extraordinary talent he soon became famed for his learning. He was a great poet, a renowned orator, a deep philosopher, an eminent theologian, and was well versed in the Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and Chaldean tongues. Like St. Paul, he attracted all by the force and sweetness of his preaching. He stood on terms of the most intimate familiarity with the most famous men of his time, and was in especial favor with Popes Julius II., Leo X., and Clement VII. His holiness of life went hand in hand with his great learning, and he has received the title of *Venerable.* He was present at the fifth Lateran Council in 1512, and delivered two discourses there. Julius II. sent him as legate to Venice and to the King of Naples. In 1515 Leo X. sent him in a like capacity to the Emperor Maximilian I., and later on to Charles V. and other princes in order to move them by his eloquence to wage war against Soliman, who was then threatening to overwhelm Christendom. In 1517 he was made Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church. Afterwards he was successively bishop of Castro, Lanciano, Zara, Sutri, Nepi, and Viterbo, and, under Clement VII., patriarch of Constantinople. The papal tiara seemed about to descend upon his head, when he died on November 12, 1532, at Rome, whither he had been summoned by Pope Clement for some matters connected with science. (See Ossinger, Lanteri, Wetzer und Wette's *Kirchenlexikon.*)

he looked on the arm of St. Nicholas of Tolentine. He adds that in beholding the prodigious mysteries of St. Clare of Montefalco he was nothing less than astounded. He then exclaims: "Great God! How powerful Clare must have been with Thee while living! How powerful, now that she is dead! When I shall see thee thou shalt hear wonderful things. The image of the Crucified, the three little pellets, and that blood which still lives and tells the future, not only draw tears to the eyes, but also ravish the heart and soul."

CHAPTER XXIX.

Wonderful Preservation of St. Clare's Body and Blood, of her Heart and the Emblems. Ebullition of her Blood as a Presage of Great Calamities.

LTHOUGH we have already devoted two chapters to the description of the emblems found in the entrails of St. Clare, we have not yet exhausted the subject. It remains for us to say something of their wonderful preservation. This preservation is so wonderful that one would find it difficult to believe if it could not be verified daily with one's own eyes. We have already heard how astonished Cardinal Aegidius was at seeing her remains; but how many other persons, conspicuous for learning, virtue, and dignity, could we mention here who have rendered testimony to the truth of these wonders! How many writers could we enumerate, some of whom have sung her praises in verse and others recorded them in prose! And how many persons, both native and foreign, of every age and station, have seen her remains through the course of several centuries, and have gone away filled with admiration at seeing them so well preserved despite the destroying influence of time, without the least aid from embalming or other artificial means! It remains to observe, for the greater exaltation of the power of

God, that it was customary for some years to make exhibition of the Saint's heart to visitors by catching it up in the hand, opening it, and taking from it the figure of the Crucified and the scourge. Notwithstanding this daily contact, the heart and symbols are to be seen to this day entire and uncorrupted.

The blood, too, which flowed from her heart at the cutting, as we mentioned above, is still preserved in a vase; and although congealed, it is of a lively red color, resembling a ruby. And here we must remark that, three hundred years after the death of the Saint, a nun, whilst cleaning away the dust from the vase which contained her blood, let it fall, and both the glass and the condensed blood were scattered in minute fragments. They were hurriedly gathered together again and placed in another glass vase, as they are to be seen at the present day. Three months afterwards the same blood was seen to boil up and then become condensed anew. As a lasting memorial of the prodigy one can still see in the coagulated blood minute pieces of the broken vase and a small portion of the broom with which it was swept up.

In speaking of the incorruption of her body, we must first premise that although Sister Frances had cut it open with the intention of embalming it, the nuns were nevertheless obliged to forego performing this process, either because of their hurry, or because the apothecary deceived them by telling them that he would send them the balsam speedily when he did not have it. This incident served to make the miracle of the preservation of her body more remarkable. Here is the series of facts. We have already remarked that the body of the Saint remained unburied for three days in order to accommodate the devotion of the faithful, and was afterwards buried in the public church. But as the faithful continued coming in great numbers, begging earnestly to be allowed to see it, the vicar at Montefalco finally consented to satisfy them, and gave orders that it should be

brought forth on the following day, which was Wednesday, at daybreak, and exposed to public view. On the reappearance of this angelic form, the nuns prostrated themselves before it and offered it new tributes of their affection, fresh tears of devotion and tenderness. The sight of this inanimate but flexible and lifelike body was enchanting. It was still just as when she died, and gave forth a most agreeable odor, notwithstanding the heat of August and the fact that the soul had departed from it four days before. They thought again of embalming the body; but the spices were not ready till the tenth day after her death. When these were at last brought, the nuns embalmed it as well as they could, according to the instructions given them, but not according to the artistic process of the ancient Egyptians, which has been entirely lost. They then enveloped it in a linen cloth, and left only the face, hands, and feet exposed, just as it is to be seen at the present day. In the mean time a small brick vault was constructed at one side of the church, and there, in a coffin which could be easily opened, her remains were laid, till in process of time they received a more honorable place of sepulture. But these remains are still uncorrupted, notwithstanding the lapse of ages and the destroying influence of the atmosphere. They can be seen to-day looking perfectly natural; nay, even a genuine likeness of them may be taken, as was frequently done by Fantino, a famous painter of Bevagna, at the order of distinguished men. We ourselves have had the happiness of seeing that precious body, and we can attest that we have never seen, among the many uncorrupted bodies of saints in Italy, any as beautiful or as well preserved in feature and in color. Cardinal Aegidius made the same remark three centuries ago, for he thus writes to his friend in the letter to which we made previous allusion: "I speak not of the beauty of the body, than which there is nothing in the world more beautiful or lifelike."

It remains for us now to say something of the prodigies connected with her blood, of which we were lately speaking. The arms of St. Nicholas of Tolentine have been known to bleed in presage of evils impending over Church or State; and the blood of our Saint has foreboded like disasters by its liquefaction and ebullitions. Here are some facts in proof of what we say. On a Saturday of the month of October, in the year 1495, the blood was seen to boil up in such a way that those who were looking on were struck with terror. Two days afterwards the fatal presage found an explanation, when the troops of the Baglioni and the Orsini were seen to hurl themselves suddenly on Gualdo Cattaneo, causing great ruin there for the space of two months. In the same year Charles VIII., king of France, ravaged the fair plains of Italy with an immense army, and made himself master of the kingdom of Naples after shedding much blood. Five years after this the ambitious Duke Valentine, in his expedition through Romagna, with an army of eleven thousand men, pitched his camp in Montefalco and the surrounding country. Before going away the officers proposed to plunder the place. Then was heard the mourning voice of a woman together with a miraculous ringing of bells and a terrible din around the tomb of the Saint. Her countenance was likewise seen to change and her blood to boil up in the vase. When these things were announced to the leaders of the army, they came to see for themselves, and were struck with such astonishment and terror that they went away leaving the place unharmed. In the year 1508 war arose between the inhabitants of Bevagna and Montefalco, and the former had prepared an ambuscade for the latter, so as to surprise and massacre them. The blood of the Saint was then seen to move, so that the citizens were put on their guard and discovered the ambuscade; and the matter was settled by a light battle. A remarkable event occurred March 20, 1560, which is related

by the most reliable biographers of the Saint. About two o'clock in the afternoon of this day the holy body was being shown to some persons from Foligno, when Sister Perpetua took in her hands the case containing the three mysterious pellets, and noticed that it was heavier than usual. As she was pointing them out with her finger, one of them suddenly split in two. This event frightened the religious, and they determined to make it public by ringing the church-bells. The people assembled in great numbers; and whilst the broken pellet was being shown them, one of the two pieces broke in two other pieces, and caused still greater consternation amongst the people. Public penitential processions were then carried on for three days to avert the threatened scourges. Even to this day the same little pellet is seen divided into several parts; and there seems to be no reason for doubting that these divisions had reference to the many schisms and heresies which were widely spread in that century and which still subsist, as is well known. In the year 1570 the Saint's blood boiled up anew in presage of the loss of the kingdom of Cyprus, which the Turks took from the Christians in the following year. Finally, this phenomenon occurred twice in the seventeenth century: once in the year 1601, whilst Monsignor Castrucci was showing it to the people in the church and pronouncing a discourse on the miracle; and the other time in 1618, when an obsessed person was brought before it. On this occasion not only did the blood liquefy and boil up, but the body of the Saint was seen by all present to raise up the right thumb, perhaps to signify that they should take away the obsessed person, as he did not deserve to be cured.

CHAPTER XXX.

Miracles worked by St. Clare after her Death. The Process for her Canonization.

THE PERFORMANCE of miracles is ascribed, in common language, sometimes to God, and sometimes to the saints. But although the saints by their merits concur in the working of them, it is nevertheless true that the Almighty alone can perform them in the true and strict sense of the word; for He, and He alone, created the world and laid down the laws of nature. He works them through the merits and at the intercession of the saints, either to bear testimony to their sanctity and make it known to the Church, or else to support and propagate the faith. This was the case with the miracles worked by St. Clare during her life, and the same may be said of those which followed after her death. The greatest of all miracles is the raising of the dead to life; and we have already spoken of the two dead persons who were raised to life through the intercession of St. Clare while she was yet among the living. Those which we shall now mention happened after her death, and contributed greatly to increase her glory.

Seven months after the death of the Saint, a child at Montefalco, by name Manentillo, a son of Matthew of Bartoletto, was playing with other children under a large heap of straw. On a sudden the heap fell and the child was buried beneath it. It was extricated in about an hour afterwards, but it was wholly suffocated. The parents were inconsolable over the loss of their child, but they had immediate recourse to the intercession of St. Clare, and their lively faith and pious vows were rewarded by seeing their dead boy restored to life. A little girl named Gigliuccia of Offreduccio fell into a deep pit of water and was drowned; but she, too, was re-

stored to life through the intercession of St. Clare, whom her pious parents had invoked. A like miracle was worked by our Saint in favor of another girl named Ciuccia, daughter of Antonio of Cerreto, to whom a like accident had happened. Angelo of Carpegna, a nobleman of Perugia who had a great devotion to St. Clare, died after a long illness and a painful agony, although he had frequently had recourse to her intercession for the restoration of his health. God was pleased to refuse his request for a while in order to work in his case a still greater miracle and so enhance the glory of His Saint. This He did by raising the dead nobleman to life, so that he afterwards came to Montefalco in person to bear witness to the holiness of his intercessor and to give her suitable thanks. In fine, a certain Paoluccio, the son of John of Montefalco, had died suddenly, and was about to have the burial-rites performed over him by the parish priest, when his mother thought of having recourse to the intercession of St. Clare. Her confidence was so great that she soon had occasion to rejoice at seeing her beloved son restored to her maternal embrace in perfect health.

It was our intention at first to give here the full list of the miracles worked by our Saint after her death; but when we consider that this would make our book more extensive than we deem desirable, and likewise that our readers might grow weary at the monotonous description of so many similar miracles, we confine ourselves to the few mentioned above. On this point we simply remark that, within the eight years which passed from the Saint's death to the completion of the process for her canonization, no less than two hundred and nineteen miracles are recorded as worked by St. Clare. Almost all of these were instantaneous and striking, as may be seen from the records of them in the above-mentioned process, in which they are all recounted with the most minute details of persons, time, and place.

Neither are the cases in which the dead were raised to life by her, of which we have spoken above, nor the many miracles which she worked during life included in this number. There is scarcely a form of disease or suffering to which her powerful intercession did not bring miraculous relief. Through her means many blind persons obtained their sight, and various forms of eye-diseases were healed; hearing was restored to the deaf or given to those who had been born so; the lame, the crippled, and the paralyzed recovered the free use of their limbs; many were freed from uterine diseases and such as are incidental to childbirth, from rupture, stone, epilepsy, scrofula, swellings in the neck and other parts of the body, from abscesses, bruises, rheumatism and various kinds of fevers; many insane persons recovered the use of their reason, and many that were possessed by the devil were freed from his power; many, too, were rescued by her from shipwreck, and from their enemies, or from still greater dangers of soul; in fine, many who showed but little esteem for the Saint, or who were incredulous as to her great power with God, were punished in various extraordinary ways that left little doubt of the divine displeasure. The power of Clare extended even to the brute creation, for she worked many miraculous cures in cases of afflicted dumb animals. Now if we add to all these wonders, which were wrought within eight years after her death, the innumerable miracles which were performed through her mediation in the past five hundred years, but whose record is lost either through the unavoidable circumstances of time long past or the unpardonable carelessness of the ungrateful recipients of her favor, our Saint must needs appear as one of the greatest wonder-workers in the history of the Church of God, and deserving as such the liveliest confidence of the faithful.

It was precisely the fame of these miracles, which went on increasing day by day, that caused the then

bishop of Spoleto, Peter Paul Trinci of Foligno, to commission his vicar-general, Berengarius Donadei, whom we have already spoken of, to institute a juridical examination of the life and miracles of the Saint. He did this, however, by the advice of twenty doctors in law and in theology who had assembled and carefully weighed the matter. Accordingly, the vicar-general commenced the legal procedure, but at the very outset the demon strove to turn him from his laudable undertaking. This he did by urging on two officials of the bishop's court to endeavor to persuade him that it was not his business to commence the process for the canonization of Clare, and, furthermore, that by so doing he would cause for himself much trouble and labor. So strenuously did they urge their opposition to the undertaking that the vicar-general was on the point of committing to the flames the materials already gathered for the examination. In his perplexity, however, he had recourse to God, who is the Father of light, and prayed that He might make known to him His holy will. In answer to his prayer the Saint herself appeared to him, clothed in a white garment which was richly adorned with gems, and diffused around such a heavenly radiance that all fear and doubt left his mind on the instant, and he experienced a holy calm and great courage to prosecute the work which he had begun.

Being furnished with the requisite authority, he accordingly betook himself to Montefalco in the month of June, 1309, about ten months after the death of Clare. On the eighteenth of the same month he opened with all due formality of law the preliminary investigation into the life and miracles of the Saint. His judicial assistants were Blessed Angela Conti of Foligno, Prior of the Augustinian Convent of Montefalco, which he himself had founded and which exists to the present day; Father Peter of Gualdo Cattaneo, a theologian of the same Order; Father Francis, the brother of the Saint,

and Father James, both Franciscans and Lectors in Sacred Theology; Bordone, a vicar-forane, and two lawyers, Andrew Raineri and Berallo Egidi. The first session of this investigating committee was held in the church of the Holy Cross in the presence of eleven nuns of the same convent, who were summoned as witnesses and duly sworn to declare the truth with all accuracy. Angelo of Giovannillo, of Montefalco, attended in the capacity of secretary at this and the other sessions. Berengarius continued his investigation, and completed it in the following year. In the mean time the miracles and the reputation for sanctity of St. Clare went on increasing to such an extent that the bishops, prelates, religious communities, and laity of Umbria sent a unanimous petition to the Holy See asking for her beatification. Berengarius was deputed by them as the procurator of the case, he being considered best informed concerning it. He undertook willingly the honorable charge, and set out in 1316 for Avignon, in which city Pope John XXII. then resided. He there gave in the first place to the Sovereign Pontiff his own private account of the investigation which he had conducted, which was in full accord with the decision of the entire committee. He afterwards repeated the same in a public consistory in a discourse remarkable for its elegance. During this address all present were astonished at learning that whilst he intended simply to use the following words: "Clare died without showing any sign of pain," he felt himself urged by a secret impulse to say instead: "Clare died without pain." He concluded his address with a prayer, in the name of the province of Umbria, that His Holiness would graciously vouchsafe to enroll Sister Clare in the catalogue of the Saints as soon as her merits would be sufficiently authenticated. The Pope, after consultation with his cardinals, concluded that the time had come to institute an investigation by apostolic authority into the case of

Sister Clare. To this end he ordered Cardinal Orsini, papal legate in Perugia, to institute a judicial examination of her case and send a full report of it to the Holy See. This examination was accordingly begun; and when it was completed in the following year, 1317, the report was duly drawn up, sealed, and brought by Berengarius to the Holy Father at Avignon. The Pope then appointed a committee of cardinals to examine it and report on it. On receiving a favorable report from this committee, and after mature deliberation, His Holiness declared that the solemn and public process concerning the life and miracles of Clare might be now instituted. The deputies of the Pope in this process were Francis Poggio, a Dominican and bishop of Perugia, the bishop of Orvieto, and Reginald of St. Artemia, who was chaplain to His Holiness and governor of the duchy of Spoleto. To these three, two papal bulls were sent—one in October, 1317, and the other in March, 1318. On the sixth of September, 1318, they opened the proceedings at Montefalco in presence of Berengarius, who acted as postulator of the cause, two notaries, Spalla Rapondi and Offreduccio of Spello, and a large assemblage of the faithful. Reginald then, after a brief monition, made the announcement that all the witnesses present, as well as those afterwards to be summoned, should, under penalty of incurring the censures of the Church and rendering themselves liable to severe temporal punishment, declare the simple and naked truth. These officials then betook themselves from the church to the convent of the Holy Cross, and there in presence of twenty-three witnesses the taking of testimony was begun. In the course of a year they examined upwards of four hundred witnesses. When the testimony was all taken, a report was drawn up and transmitted to the Holy Father at Avignon. His Holiness again deputed three cardinals to examine this report and make known to him their opinion concerning it. This they did in public consistory; and their

conclusion was that the process had been conducted in due form, and that the Sovereign Pontiff could now proceed to the canonization of Clare. The most reliable authors attest that Pope John XXII. was extremely anxious of enrolling in the catalogue of the saints not only Clare of Montefalco but also Nicholas of Tolentine, who was likewise an Augustinian. He did not do it, however, and the reason was that his reign was disturbed by wars and schisms; and he died at last without being able to accomplish his pious wish.

But, notwithstanding the failure to secure her canonization at that time, our Saint enjoyed, in addition to her heavenly glory, great fame here on earth. We have already spoken of the extraordinary concourse of the faithful on the occasion of her death, and of the multitudes that visited her tomb. These multitudes were made up, not only of the faithful of Umbria, but of foreigners and pilgrims of every condition of life, of persons eminent for their dignity and sanctity, of princes, prelates, bishops, cardinals, and popes. We have also told how, from the very first years after her happy departure for Heaven, her name was honored in public festivals and panegyrics, and she was endowed by public acclamation with the title of Saint. It would be too tedious to enumerate here the numerous votive offerings that were laid upon her tomb by reason of the many wonderful favors obtained through her intercession. We shall content ourselves, therefore, with mentioning a few of the more noteworthy tributes of respect and veneration paid to the memory of our Saint as well by private persons as by public authority. Twenty-five years after her death, John of Amelia, governor of the duchy of Spoleto, had the church of the Saint painted with scenes from her life. In the following century the magistrate of Montefalco issued a decree in which the order was renewed to observe annually the feast of the Saint, and to offer to her the wax tapers borne in pro-

cession in her honor, as was customary in the case of patron saints. A short time after, Monsignor Lotto Sardi, bishop of Spoleto, completed the rebuilding of the convent church, and erected a new stone tomb, in which he placed a neat casket or shrine as a receptacle for the venerated body of our Saint. This case exists at the present time, and on it may be seen painted three pictures of the Saint clothed in her black habit. About a hundred years afterwards, Maria Manuel, Marchioness of Santa Croce, on receiving at the tomb of the Saint some signal favor from Heaven, left there, in token of her gratitude, a rich and elegantly ornamented shrine of crystal, to which the body was immediately transferred. Two centuries ago two Jesuit fathers came to Montefalco, sent there by the then General, Acquaviva, and brought with them a case of solid silver, in which to place the body of the Saint. This case was the gift of some unknown personage. Urban VIII., who had previously been bishop of Spoleto, granted to the Augustinian and Franciscan Orders the privilege of reciting an office and celebrating Mass in honor of Clare. This privilege was afterwards extended to the whole diocese of Spoleto, and is at present enjoyed in many other places. In order to satisfy the devotion of the people to our Saint, the custom was introduced, centuries ago, of opening the case in which her body is enshrined, that the sacred remains may receive public veneration. This is done twice every year: on the feast of the Finding of the Holy Cross, the third of May, and on the feast of the Nativity of St. John the Baptist, the twenty-fourth of June. On the night preceding this latter feast, the nuns of the convent at Montefalco strip the body of the Saint, clean away the dust, and clothe it in new garments. This custom has prevailed ever since the death of the Saint, and is carried out even at the present time without the slightest injury to her body, though she is dead for nearly six hundred years. The old garments

are cut up into strips and distributed to the pious faithful. But the veneration of our Saint is not confined to Umbria, or even to Italy; it has spread to the very ends of the earth. No earthly monarch has been or will be so much honored as this poor and lowly servant of the Crucified; and this not merely by men in this miserable world, but especially by the all-righteous Scrutinizer of hearts and Judge of Sanctity—by God Himself in Heaven. There she is glorified and made happy by the pure and unspeakable joys of Paradise, by that glory which was merited by her holiness of life, and which shall not grow less for ages without end.

CHAPTER XXXI.

Resumption of the Cause of St. Clare; its Vicissitudes and Happy Termination.

OD UNDOUBTEDLY directs the Roman Pontiffs by an especial providence and by peculiar illuminations in decreeing the honors of our altars to those chosen souls who have distinguished themselves beyond other holy persons by their heroic virtues and great miracles. Nevertheless, how inscrutable are His judgments and how unsearchable are His ways! For some He so disposes matters that all obstacles in the way of their canonization are speedily surmounted and the final authoritative decision is soon given. In the case of others, on the contrary, He permits so many difficulties, both intrinsic and extrinsic, to intervene, that whole centuries pass away before the desired end can be reached. But whether He hastens or delays, He who disposes all things in number, weight, and measure so arranges matters that the exaltation of His servants comes precisely in the time which will be of the greatest glory to them and most advantageous to the Church. Such reflections as these can alone explain to

us the long delay in the canonization of St. Clare of Montefalco.

Very soon after her happy death, an ardent desire to see her numbered amongst the saints was expressed by persons of every class, to whom her extraordinary virtues and the wonderful miracles wrought by God through her intercession were well known. The proper authority made the initiative step and prosecuted the cause of her canonization with such celerity that within twenty-five years from her death it was nearly carried to a happy completion. The investigations set on foot by the bishop and the Apostolic See having been completed, the Sovereign Pontiff, Pope John XXII., commissioned, as we have already said, three cardinals, according to the custom of the Roman Court in those times, who were to examine these documents and make a careful report concerning them in public consistory. This report was drawn up in the year 1326, and read in the consistory, according to the testimony of reliable historians. Without doubt John XXII., who had already canonized St. Louis of Toulouse, St. Thomas of Hereford, and St. Thomas of Aquin, would have likewise canonized St. Clare, as well as St. Nicholas of Tolentine, if the serious troubles of the times had not hindered him.

The cause, however, was interrupted for reasons wholly foreign, and not for anything contrary to the heroic character of the Saint's virtues; and it was only after the lapse of four centuries that it was seriously thought of resuming it. In this long space of time the veneration paid to her from the beginning of the fourteenth century in no wise diminished; nay, it increased and spread to many other places besides her native province, enriched as it was with privileges by the Holy See. God Himself, too, did not fail to make famous the merits of His servant by new favors and miracles, and especially by preserving in a state of incorruption her virginal body and her heart, on which latter His almighty hand had im-

pressed the figure of the crucified Jesus, and moulded the representation of the emblems of the passion a hundred times better than a skilful sculptor could have fashioned them on hard bronze. By this God wished to work a permanent miracle in favor of our Saint, and one which would speak incessantly to the hearts of all who would be witnesses of it. Notwithstanding all this, history makes no mention of the resumption of the cause of her canonization till the first half of the last century. It was precisely during the pontificate of Clement XII. that cities and towns, bishops and prelates, and even the Duke of Modena, entreated the Holy See, as formerly happened during the pontificate of John XXII., to vouchsafe to hearken to their ardent desires and propose Clare for the veneration of the entire Catholic Church.

The Sovereign Pontiff received kindly their warm supplications, and transmitted them for speedy execution to the Sacred Congregation of Rites. This Congregation sought out and examined the ancient records of the apostolic processes as well as the other documents which had a bearing on the case and which were found in the archives of the convent at Montefalco. But, strange to say, a new method of procedure had been introduced by Clement IX. in such cases, and this was followed in the new investigation as being more careful and sure. According to the regulations, then, of this new law the resumption of the cause of St. Clare was approved of on February 16, 1737, in the ordinary Congregation of Sacred Rites. On the twentieth day of the same month the previously named Sovereign Pontiff deigned to sign the commission with his own hand. On April 13 of the same year he approved the decree concerning the case made exception of by the decrees of Urban VIII. On July 25 of the following year letters remissorial and compulsory were issued to institute specifically a new apostolic investigation into the virtues and miracles of Clare.

This new process was completed in 1742, transmitted to the Sacred Congregation, and shortly afterwards approved of as valid. Then other documents were issued for the investigation of her virtues, but no further steps were taken in the case at that time. It is impossible to say why no further action was then taken in the matter, and even Benedict XIV. himself says that he cannot explain it. On seeing that the cause was abandoned for another century and more, we are forced to exclaim: How incomprehensible and inscrutable are the ways of the Lord towards His elect! Notwithstanding all this, the postulators of the cause, who belonged to the Order of the Hermits of St. Augustine, never ceased to watch for a favorable opportunity to bring the case to a successful issue, that they might thus satisfy the desires of the faithful, and especially of the religious of the entire Augustinian Order, which recognizes in Clare one of its leading ornaments.

This favorable occasion seemed to present itself in 1846. In that year the immortal Pontiff, Pius IX., of glorious and happy memory, had been elected to sit in the chair of St. Peter. He had been, previous to his election to the see of Rome, Archbishop of Spoleto, and had always shown himself most devout towards St. Clare and extremely zealous for her canonization. Report has it that on the occasion of his first visitation of Montefalco, he remarked, in astonishment at seeing her body so beautiful and so free from corruption: "If I become pope, I shall make her a saint." The postulator accordingly had recourse without delay to the new Pontiff, entreating him for permission to resume the cause which had lain for more than a century in almost total oblivion. It is not easy to say with what joy Pius IX. heard the petition and with what eagerness he granted the favor. However, on account of the long delay occasioned by the examination of various documents relating to the cause which belonged to the fourteenth century,

as well as on account of other necessary legal forms, the meeting to discuss her virtues could not be held by the cardinals till September 7, 1850. The decision of this meeting was favorable; and furthermore, permission was granted, on account of the special circumstances of the case, to proceed to the canonization after the due proof of two miracles only, derogating in this from the rules to the contrary. But exactly here arose a new source of delay on the part of him who by his office was to be expected to promote the cause as far as lay in his power. The postulator of the cause was induced in some way to propose to the Sacred Congregation of Rites the following doubt: If it were lawful to select the two miracles required by the decree of 1850 for the canonization of Clare from amongst those recorded in the ancient documents of the investigation made by the authority of Pope John XXII., and worked by God through the intercession of Clare before she enjoyed any public or ecclesiastical veneration. This question was based on a false supposition, for the veneration of Clare, as is shown from incontestable documents which we pass over for the sake of brevity, had its beginning immediately after her death, with the explicit approval of the bishops of Spoleto, and at least the tacit consent of the Roman Pontiffs. And if Nicholas V., who visited Montefalco in 1447 in order to venerate her, as we read in the life of Blessed Muzio Petroni, permitted a commemoration to be made of her in the divine office with a prayer proper composed by himself; if Urban VIII. granted permission to recite the office and celebrate Mass in her honor; if Clement X. approved the historical lessons in her office and the prayers proper to her in the office and Mass, and likewise caused her name to be inserted in the Roman Martyrology with a eulogium in which mention is made of the mysterious symbols found in her heart,—these concessions by no means indicate the origin of the veneration granted by the Holy See to our Saint, but only constitute an explicit exten-

sion made by the same Apostolic See of a veneration already existing. From this it follows as a necessary consequence that the greater part of the miracles contained in the above-mentioned documents were worked by St. Clare after she was in the legitimate enjoyment of a public and ecclesiastical veneration. Whence we remarked with reason that the doubt proposed by the postulator to the Sacred Congregation was based on a false supposition. No wonder, however, that the Congregation, faithful to the rules traced out for it by the wisdom of the Roman Pontiffs, gave a negative answer to the question on August 12, 1854. This decision dealt a severe blow to the cause of the glorious virgin of Montefalco. One might almost say that God, for His own hidden purposes, had permitted the Demon, who had so often been discomfited in his attacks on Clare, to hinder her cause from being brought to a happy termination, as he had already sought in various ways to hinder its introduction.

But we already remarked at the beginning of this chapter, that it is God Himself, who is blessed above all, who advances or retards the causes of His saints by the dispositions of a most special providence. And as our Saint appeared to Berengarius on a former occasion and dissolved all the doubts that were raised in his mind by the infernal enemy, so now too she seems to have employed herself in obtaining from her Heavenly Spouse the necessary light for him who was to conduct her cause to its final happy issue. In the mean time, in obedience to the last decree of the Congregation, the postulator abandoned the miracles mentioned in the ancient records and had recourse to the other Apostolic process, which had been instituted, as we have said, during the pontificate of Clement XII. But the juridical proofs for the miracles which God had been pleased to work through the intercession of His beloved Clare for the space of upwards of four centuries had not been taken, and so it

was morally impossible to find in these documents two specific miracles that were furnished with the necessary ocular testimony. Of the other miracles mentioned there, as for example, the preservation of her heart, the impression of the instruments of the passion, the incorruption of her virginal body, no account could be taken, as they were already included in the ancient records. Hence it was necessary to desist for a while from any further proceedings. Some time afterwards, in 1862, the Pontiff of the Immaculate Conception gave permission for the resumption of the cause of the twenty-six Japanese martyrs, which had been interrupted by the disturbances of the times. By this permission their cause might be resumed in the very state and terms in which it was when interrupted, and by consequence the miracles which had been performed before the concession and approbation of their veneration were sufficient to bring their cause to a happy conclusion. A like concession was granted in 1867 in the case of the nineteen martyrs of Gorcum, as also for Blessed Josaphat and Blessed Peter of Arbues. Encouraged by these instances of pontifical indulgence the postulator of the cause, Father Nicholas Primavera, recently deceased, made supplication to the Sovereign Pontiff, Leo XIII., begging him that he would deign, after the example of his predecessor, to accord a like faculty in the case of St. Clare, which was in no wise different from the others. The sanctity of Clare and the veneration which that sanctity caused her to be everywhere held in were well known to Leo XIII., for he had lived for a long time in Umbria as bishop of Perugia, and had, moreover, twice visited Montefalco and been greatly moved at sight of her holy remains. Accordingly, after having received repeatedly from Monsignor the Promotor of the Faith, a clear and exact statement of the case, he was pleased to grant the petition of the postulator on April 26, 1881. He established at the same time a special Congregation,

which was composed of cardinals and of prelates belonging to the Sacred Congregation of Rites, with power to examine authoritatively the miracles recorded in the ancient apostolic processes which had been already proposed to John XXII. for his approbation.

After this rescript, which had been issued with the greatest prudence and justice by apostolic authority, the excellent advocate of the cause became convinced that he could attain the end proposed. He was not dismayed by the fact that the documents which had reference to the ancient apostolic processes, as well as those which contained the compendious report of the cardinals to John XXII. on the thirty-five leading miracles worked by St. Clare and on their juridical proofs, had been lost. He had in his possession some fragments which had reference only to three miracles, but he thought that these would suffice. However, though the arguments adduced by him to prove the authenticity and legality of these fragments were not wanting in weight, nevertheless all doubt was not removed by them as to the full proof of the miracles, and especially as to whether these three miracles formed part of the thirty-five selected by the cardinals in their report. Accordingly, all who were interested in the case set themselves to work with the greatest diligence in searching for the lost documents. And, although it was deemed useless to institute further searches either in the public or private libraries of Rome, Florence, and Naples, nevertheless it was firmly believed that these persevering searches would be finally crowned by Divine Providence with a happy issue. Indeed, we may well believe that it was by a singular disposition of God's providence that Monsignor Caprara, Sub-promotor of the Faith, who was surpassed by none in his zeal for the happy termination of the case, found, whilst searching in the archives of the Sacred Congregation and of the Vatican, twenty documents, some in paper and some in parchment, containing precisely what was

necessary for the cause of St. Clare. It would be no easy task to tell what joy this discovery brought to all who were interested in the cause of our Saint.

After the authenticity of these precious documents had been placed beyond doubt by the testimony of three paleographers, the advocates of the Saint were able to form a second summary from them, by which they not only dispelled every doubt about the three miracles already proposed, but were furthermore able to extend the discussion to the full series of the thirty-five miracles contained in the report of the three cardinals, Orsini, Bertrando, and De Reblayo, to Pope John XXII. In a word, after the finding of these documents the cause was fully and formally resumed, according to the concession of Leo XIII.; that is to say, it might now be discussed in the very state and terms in which it was in the first half of the fourteenth century. To proceed, however, with greater caution, to the last act of the discussion, the report, together with the record of the thirty-five miracles and their proofs, was handed over for examination to two most eminent professors of medicine and surgery. These were to give their mature, scientific, and conscientious judgment, under oath and without having had any communication with each other, as to how many and which of these thirty-five cases they deemed real and undoubted miracles. The opinions given by these two most learned men agreed in recognizing, as far as their judgment went, the evident impress of the finger of God in six of the cases submitted to them. These six were the cases marked by the numbers I, VI, VII, XV, XIX, XXIII.

The supplication *pro rei veritate* (on the truth of the matter) having been made by Monsignor the Promotor of the Faith, the members composing the special congregation established by the Pope were able to meet on July 30, 1881, to solve the doubt proposed by the defender of the cause. The cardinals and prelates who

had been deputed for this purpose undertook the examination of the six miracles which had been previously examined by the scientists, and after a long and mature deliberation gave their explicit decision that all and each of the six miracles were what they purported to be—true and undoubted miracles. In giving this decision they used great caution in their language lest they should seem to exclude the other twenty-nine from the category of true miracles. They likewise expressed their opinion that the canonization of Clare of Montefalco might be immediately proceeded with, if such were pleasing to the Sovereign Pontiff. A full and accurate report of the entire proceedings of this congregation being afterwards made to the Holy Father, he was pleased to give his unqualified approbation to all its decisions. On the 11th September of the same year, 1881, the feast of the most holy Name of the Blessed Virgin Mary, His Holiness, Leo XIII., published, by virtue of his infallible authority, the solemn decree which declared Clare to be one of the saints of God's Church. Of this decree we shall give a translation at the end of this little book. This is, in brief, the history of the resumption, the vicissitudes, and the happy termination of the cause. It appears from the records of the apostolic investigations that Clare herself had prophesied, in one of her apparitions after death, that such would be the final issue of her case.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Miracles Approved for the Canonization of Clare.

ALTHOUGH, according to the decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rites issued September 7, 1850, and approved by Pius IX. on the 13th of the same month and year, two miracles only needed to be proved for the solemn canonization of St. Clare, nevertheless, as we

have told in the preceding chapter, six were authoritatively recognized and approved of as true miracles. Of these we shall give a brief account in the present chapter.

FIRST MIRACLE.

Signs of the mysteries of the passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ impressed on the heart of Clare—a miracle of the first class.

Since the reader has already received an accurate and minute account of this first miracle in the proper place of the life of St. Clare, we omit further mention of it here. We shall merely observe, before passing to the second, that, as these impressions included all the instruments used by the Jews in torturing the Redeemer, each one of them might well be considered a miracle in itself; or, if they be regarded as one miracle, they should be looked upon as one which is equivalent to many.

SECOND MIRACLE.

Instantaneous and perfect cure of Cetto Speranza of a frightful varus of both feet from which he suffered from birth.

At the very time in which the sacred symbols of the passion that were in the heart of St. Clare were shown by permission of the ecclesiastical authorities to the faithful who had assembled from all parts of the broad and fertile valley of Spoleto, God Himself was pleased to testify to the truth of the prodigy and the sanctity of His servant by an extraordinary miracle. She, like the Spouse in the Canticles, had the image of her Beloved engraven as a seal on her heart, and God wished to show how powerful her intercession was for those who had recourse to her with lively and humble confidence. Amongst the many who experienced the power of her intercession was a boy named Cetto Speranza, of the village of Cortignano, not far from Montefalco. This boy had his feet so deformed from his very birth that their upper portion was turned downwards, and the

soles were turned upwards and inwards in such a manner that they faced and almost touched each other. This horrible monstrosity is a species of what is commonly known as club-foot, and is known in surgery by the technical name of *double varus.* By this disease the bones of the tarsus, which is the part of the foot immediately adjoining the ankle are displaced, and the ligaments are distended on one side and shortened on the other, so that the wretched creature who is afflicted with it is compelled instead of walking to drag his body along in the most painful manner. This poor boy of whom we speak had never, according to the testimony of eighteen witnesses, made a single attempt to move during the twelve years of his life except on his hands or on crutches. As he was poor and had to live by alms, like the cripple mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, he was carried daily by some charitable persons to the door of the village church, where he solicited aid from the faithful. The physicians had employed every means to cure his deformity, but neither plasters, nor baths, nor bandages, nor any other remedy known to science in those times could give him relief. The cure of his disease became more difficult as he advanced in years; for length of time had so hardened and solidified the muscles and tendons that the disease became chronic, and it was impossible for surgical skill to do anything for it. All who knew the boy felt deep pity for him, but for his poor, desolate mother especially his state was a source of the keenest anguish. The fame of St. Clare's sanctity and miracles, however, was rapidly spreading through all the surrounding country, and soon reached the ears of this poor woman, who had immediate recourse to the Saint with the liveliest faith. She brought her son with her to Montefalco, and by the aid of some charitably-disposed persons succeeded in placing him on the tomb of St. Clare. In the mean time, mother, son, and all the by-standers offered up prayers full of humble and pious

confidence. In about a quarter of an hour the boy broke forth into loud cries, expressive of the acute pains that he felt, which were quite similar to those experienced by persons whose displaced bones are being put back into their normal position. His mother and all present ran towards him on hearing his cries, and behold! one of the boy's feet was already straightened and completely cured. The by-standers redoubled their prayers, and within an hour they saw the other foot assume its natural state. Cetto jumped to his feet, and, like the cripple healed by St. Peter, though he felt at first some pain by reason of the tenderness of the skin, ran through the church rejoicing and chanting the praise of his great benefactress. On seeing this his mother and all present joined the boy in blessing and thanking the Saint, in exalting her name, and spreading her glory far and wide. From that day forth the ankles, heels, and soles of the boy always retained their natural position and strength, and ten years afterwards Cetto himself gave with sentiments of the liveliest gratitude his deposition of the miracle to the apostolic commissioners, who were anxious to see for themselves the feet that had been so miraculously cured through the intercession of St. Clare.

THIRD MIRACLE.

Instantaneous and perfect cure of Antony Romanone of an inveterate lameness which resulted from a contraction of the left leg, ankylosis, and other morbid conditions.

Another miracle, not unlike the preceding, was wrought through the intercession of St. Clare in the case of Antony Romanone, a young man of twenty years and a native of Montefalco. This youth had been attacked in his childhood with severe pains in the joints of his left leg, and, although immediate recourse was had to various remedies, amongst other to frequent bathing, the pains continued. This was a bad sign for

the unfortunate sufferer. In point of fact, the arthritic process or inflammation of the joints went on increasing, and soon attacked with especial violence the joint of the knee, rendering it impossible for him to bend it. The physicians had recourse to violent remedies, as well to cure the knee as to hinder the disease from attacking the joints of the hip and ankle; but all was in vain. On account of the long duration of the disease the bones of the left leg in their three articulations became so united through the osseous humor discharged from them as to form but a single bone in the entire leg, and that perfectly stiff. As a consequence of this ankylosis or stiffening of the joints, atrophy or the wasting away of the limb set in; that is to say, the limb, for want of nutriment, lost its natural volume and became dried up, it having been already enormously shortened by reason of the long rigidity of the joints. Such, in brief, as we gather from the testimony of sworn witnesses, were the origin and progress of this disease, which for fifteen years tortured the unfortunate Romanone, getting ever worse, and leaving him no hope of being relieved either by the forces of nature or the resources of art. His deformity was so great that he was known throughout the entire neighborhood as the "cripple."

In the mean time the fame of the miracles worked by St. Clare went on increasing daily, and soon an occasion presented itself which Romanone deemed extremely propitious. It was August 22, 1308, the day on which the legal document concerning the emblems of the passion was being drawn up by the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, and these emblems were being shown to the faithful amidst a blaze of lights when Antony, notwithstanding his wretched state, dragged himself to the church to offer them his veneration. At sight of these sacred symbols he put forth most fervent prayers to the Saint for the cure of his disease, promising that if his prayers were heard he would bring to her

tomb an offering in token of the favor obtained. He had scarcely uttered these prayers and made the promises when he felt a gentle perspiration proceed from the dried bones and flesh of his diseased leg—an undoubted sign that his prayers had been already heard by our Saint. In fact, on the following night, as he was sleeping calmly, Clare appeared to him surrounded with celestial splendor, approached his bed, and seemed to him to touch his diseased limb. On the disappearance of the vision he awoke, and redoubled his prayers to the Saint that she would intercede with God in his behalf. But, wonderful to relate, the vision which he had had was a reality. The disease had already departed at the touch of Clare, and he found himself perfectly cured. He could hardly contain himself for joy and ran immediately to awaken his two brothers, John and Thomas, to whom he narrated the occurrence. They could scarcely credit it, but he showed them the limb and allowed them to touch it with their hands, so that they saw that it was not only flexible and as long as the other, but that it had also acquired its natural volume.

To explain all this the unbeliever will say that the crisis had come, and that this fact, together with the perspiration which had begun the preceding day, and the fancy of Antony, stirred up by the alleged apparition, is sufficient to explain the cure. But crises occur only in acute maladies and not in such as that with which Romanone was afflicted, as skilled physicians know; and besides, as was well remarked by the scientist who examined the record of the case, not even rivers of perspiration would have sufficed to cure the diseased limb of this youth. Supposing that an excited fancy could have produced the effect of making the leg flexible, a point which we absolutely deny, how could that fancy clothe in an instant the same leg with the flesh of which it had been almost completely stripped for years? Indeed, we may well say that the theories of

unbelievers are more groundless than the wildest vagaries of superstition. The poor youth, who had been so miraculously cured, lost no time in repairing to the church along with his brothers to fulfill his vow and return thanks to God for the wonderful favor bestowed on him through the intercession of St. Clare. No trace of his disease remained or ever afterwards appeared.

FOURTH MIRACLE.

Instantaneous and perfect cure of Flora Nicolai of a complete and inveterate Prolapsus Uteri.

Eight years after the occurrence just detailed, our Saint, who was ever ready to succor the afflicted, effected another miraculous cure in the case of Flora, the wife of Simon Nicolai of Montefalco. This poor woman had suffered for three years the most excruciating pains from a complete *prolapsus uteri*, or falling of the womb. The physicians who attended her, though well skilled in their art, had tried every remedy, but were unable to relieve her of her spasms, much less to cure her disease. In addition to violent inward pains, she suffered also from frequent convulsions, cold sweats, loss of strength, and many other maladies that usually accompany this disease. Tortured in this way, the poor woman could not take even the shortest repose; and her condition was a source of great grief to her entire family, who saw how much she suffered and still could give her no relief. It was not to be wondered at, therefore, if the unfortunate woman, in the delirium occasioned by her sufferings and the paroxysms of her incurable disease, forgetful of the Christian law which enjoins resignation to the Divine will, thought of bringing her miserable existence to a close by her own hand. Before executing her ill-advised design, however, she told it in confidence to her mother. This good woman, on learning the terrible resolution of her afflicted daughter, sought by every means in her power to dissuade her from carrying it into

effect; and in order to console her as best she could, she told her of the miracles that had been wrought by St. Clare, exhorting her to place her confidence in so powerful an advocate. Flora was moved by these narrations and the warm exhortations of her mother, and had immediate recourse to St. Clare, offering up to her with a pious confidence this short and fervent prayer: "Oh! holy virgin Clare, deliver me, I beseech thee, from these terrible pains, from this frightful disease, and I promise that I will fast on bread and water on the vigil of thy feast." Having uttered this prayer she fell into a calm and gentle sleep. Whilst in that state the Saint appeared to her, clothed in a white and shining garment, and attended by a companion; and Flora heard as plainly as if she were awake these words of gentle censure, but likewise of sweet consolation: "Oh! Christian matron, be careful not to put in execution what you are contemplating; wait for three days more and you will be completely cured." With this the vision disappeared, leaving in the soul of Flora calmness and hope. The three days passed and Flora was in reality restored to the possession of perfect health. Flora was faithful to her promise of fasting on the vigil of St. Clare's feast, and never afterwards suffered from that disease. Out of gratitude towards her benefactress, she never ceased to make known to all the miracle worked in her behalf by St. Clare of Montefalco, and four years afterwards she, in company with her mother and her own daughter, made statement on oath of the miracle before the apostolic judges and explained to them, for the glory of God and St. Clare, all the circumstances of the case.

FIFTH MIRACLE.

Instantaneous and complete cure of a child named Lucarello Jacometti of a cancer of both the eyes with blindness and an enormous wasting away of the eye-balls, which protruded from their sockets.

In the year 1308, during the fierce intestinal struggle

which raged between the two factions known as the Guelphs and Ghibellines, the latter party obtained possession of Spoleto. Angelo Jacometti, who belonged to the Guelph faction, was on this account constrained to fly his native province and take refuge with his wife and child in Montefalco. This child, whose name was Luke, was only three years of age at that time, and was usually called by his parents out of endearment by the name of Lucarello or little Luke. This poor child was seized with a violent inflammation of the eyes, which the physicians could do nothing to remedy, and which soon degenerated into a cancer and by degrees affected both eyes. The eye-balls, as was testified to by those who saw him, protruded from their sockets by reason of the condensation of cellular tissue and hung down in a horrible malformation over the cheeks; the eye-brows were kept forcibly open, and the pupils and sight were completely destroyed. A bloody and corrosive humor had, moreover, horribly disfigured the parts contiguous to the eyes, so that his parents were constrained, when they wished to bring him with them anywhere outside the house, to cover his face with a dense veil in order not to cause a nausea to those who might see him. The malady became more threatening every day. The slow and continual fever with which he was tormented clearly showed that the poisonous matter had already communicated itself to his entire blood. The emaciation of his body and the excessive prostration of his strength proved, beyond a doubt, that the poor child was reduced to the very last stages. We learn, in fact, from the records of the case, that his parents with other persons who had come to condole with them in their great affliction stood in sadness at the bedside of Lucarello, waiting for his innocent soul to wing its way to Heaven. The father, however, was not able to endure the sad spectacle, and withdrew that he might not be a witness to the death of his beloved child. Whilst he was waiting in

anguish, at a distance, for the message which would tell him of the death of his dear Lucarello, a lady appeared to him clothed in a religious habit and all radiant with glory, who said to him these consoling words, "Bring the child to me and he will be cured," and then disappeared. Amid doubt and hope he rushes to the bedside of his dying child, and puts away all fear on finding him still alive. He then tells, with feelings of hope and confidence, his afflicted wife and all present of the occurrence. Being convinced that the religious, who had spoken to him in the apparition, was Sister Clare, who had lately passed to eternal glory with a great reputation for sanctity, he commenced to recommend his dear child to her with a lively faith and a firm hope, promising, if the Saint would hear his prayer, that he would bring his child every year with him to her tomb. On the following day, in obedience to the injunction of Clare, the pious parents took their dying child from his little bed, and, covering his face as usual with the veil, brought him to the Church of the Holy Cross and placed him on the tomb of the Saint. Meantime, the father and mother poured forth fervent prayers to the Saint, entreating her to accomplish what she had promised the night before. The child itself was sleeping the calm and placid sleep of innocence, no uncertain presage of its near restoration to health. An hour had scarcely passed when the pious mother awoke the child in hope and lifted the veil from his face. Behold! not the slightest trace of the terrible malady could be seen. His eyes were completely healed and in their natural position, and shone out bright and clear. The little fellow raised himself up, and, moved by natural instinct, threw himself with exultation upon the neck of his mother, who was weeping for joy. The pious parents instantly set to work to render suitable thanksgiving to the celestial benefactress of their son. The by-standers, astounded at this miraculous cure, wished to examine the boy, and when they saw

that Lucarello could see and at the same time danced around in his exultation, they were convinced that he had recovered not only his sight but also his strength of body. The rejoicing child, unlike the blind man in the Gospel who had been cured by our Lord, was unable to bear testimony of himself to the miracle, but his parents did it for him, assuring everyone that their son had become really blind, and that now, by the merits of St. Clare, he both saw and had been rescued from death.

SIXTH MIRACLE.

Instantaneous and perfect cure of the cleric Chino Rinalducci of an inveterate inguinal hernia.

So many and such great miracles were being continually wrought at the tomb of St. Clare that even the faithful of distant provinces were moved to have recourse to her that they might obtain through her intercession the health which they had sought in vain from human art. Moved by the fame of our Saint, Chino Rinalducci came from Orvieto to obtain the cure of his disease. He was a cleric, and was attached in this capacity to the monastery of the Holy Cross in Sassovivo. One day he fell through some accident from a high wall and contracted from the fall an inguinal hernia. This hernia was so severe that, notwithstanding the constant use of the truss or belt, he could not keep in the intestines, which protruded from the wound and formed a large tumor in the injured abdominal region. This rupture had kept him in a state of complete inactivity for the space of eight years. Moderate walking or the use of any spirituous beverages, even the lightest wine, was extremely painful and injurious to him. The chronic character of the disease and his advanced age had taken from him every hope of being cured, and there now remained for him no other resource save the assistance of some heavenly advocate. In hope of such aid from on high, he be-

took himself to Montefalco to the tomb of the Saint to entreat her that she would deign to be his advocate with God. To render her more favorable to his cause he made a vow that he would come yearly during his life to visit her tomb and would fast on her feast-day. When he came to Spoleto he went to pay a visit of courtesy to Father James of Foligno, rector of the church of St. Apollinaris, and likewise a member of the community of Sassovivo. To him he made known the object of his journey, the vow which he had made, and the firm confidence which he entertained of obtaining through the aid of St. Clare the cure which he so eagerly desired. The good priest on hearing this used every effort to confirm him in his confidence and even to increase it. His efforts were not in vain, for Chino went without delay to the church of St. Apollinaris, and there on bended knees renewed his vow before the altar, and poured forth his supplications to Clare with redoubled fervor and confidence. He did not lose courage, although his prayers were not instantly heard. Still the delay was very short. When he arose on the following morning he found, to his great astonishment and delight, that he was perfectly cured. Laying aside the belt which he wore, he commenced to make experiments of every kind, fatiguing himself by walking, riding on horseback, and discharging various offices in the monastery, but he did all without the slightest inconvenience, and continued long after so to occupy himself without ever again suffering from the hernia.

These are the six from among the thirty-five miracles in the ancient records which were approved of by the Sovereign Pontiff as being more remarkable and better supported by proofs than the others. The remaining twenty-nine were not subjected to examination, but were by no means rejected. It is not our intention to record them here, as this would lead us beyond the limits we have prescribed for ourselves; but if any of our readers

be desirous of knowing them we refer them to Piergigli and other authors who have written the life of our Saint.

CONCLUSION.

ALTHOUGH the opposition between virtue and vice, good and evil, flows continually from the same source, nevertheless, as experience shows, the forms which this antagonism assumes are manifold. The world is unchangeable in one thing only, and that is in making war on Jesus Christ, who has denounced the malice of its works. It is continually changing the means which it employs in this conflict. Vice assumes new phases and new names according to the age in which it flourishes, and transforms itself into a thousand shapes that it may adapt itself for its purpose. A cursory glance at the history of the human race will suffice to convince anyone that this war of vice upon virtue has been waged from the very beginning even to the present day, no change taking place in it save in the manner of attack. In the midst of this untiring conflict there is one grand feature which must needs strike the reflecting mind with astonishment, and that is the admirable manner in which Divine Providence always comes to the aid of virtue and justice by raising up holy souls, who by their life, which is diametrically opposed to the dominant corruption, rout the forces of vice and error, which ever seek to make themselves masters of the situation. This Providence of God always opposes new modes of defense to the new ways of attack. Whence it follows that, though virtue is formally one, just as the Holy Ghost who infuses it into the souls of the just is one, nevertheless, this same virtue is manifold and various in its character, and is always clothed with some special trait which adapts it to make headway against the prevailing corruption. This con-

sideration naturally leads us to admire the Providence of God towards His Church in decreeing the high honors of our altars to the sainted virgin of Montefalco.

In point of fact, modern society seems to have denied altogether the spiritual and the heavenly in order to busy itself solely about the sensible and the earthly. Having turned all its attention to the multiplication of material enjoyments and the satisfaction of the sensual appetites, it measures all things, not by the real, rational good which they afford, but by the amount of sensual pleasure which can be derived from them. Hence he is a true hero in the world's eyes who has discovered some new mode of material comfort. On account of this insatiable thirst for earthly joys the maxims of our Divine Redeemer are not only forgotten but despised. The duty of continually restraining one's appetites is, in the eyes of the world, nothing else than a check upon the flights of genius, and to embrace one's cross with joy is to the world the height of folly. To bring an erring society back, then, to the love of virtue and of its real good, God strives to counteract the fascinating glamour of worldly enjoyment by proposing to it the example of men, and even of feeble women, who have acquired true glory, imperishable fame, and a home of never-ending happiness by despising all that the world esteems and embracing all that the world despises. The history of the Church presents, indeed, for our imitation the examples of many women who have given by their lives a new testimony to the truth of the doctrine which Jesus Christ in His infinite wisdom has preached to men; that, namely, true happiness is the inheritance of the humble and the suffering, of those who weep and follow Him courageously and patiently along the thorny path of the cross. The life of St. Clare of the Cross, whom Leo XIII. has raised to the high honors of our altars, offers to all Christians a brilliant illustration of these exalted and important principles. In Clare we have, as in other heroes and

heroines of the Catholic Church, not only a shining example of poverty, of virginal chastity, and of exact obedience, according to the counsels of the Divine Master, but we have also in her, in an especial manner, the example of the love of the cross of Jesus Christ—of that cross which is, according to Holy Writ, the source of all knowledge and wisdom, and in which is found the compendium of the entire teaching of Jesus Christ and the very essence of Christianity. In imitation of St. Paul, our Saint resolved from her earliest years not to long for any other knowledge save that of Jesus Christ, and of Him crucified, and likewise not to glory in anything else except His Holy Cross. It was for this reason that she received the name of Clare of the Cross. She had Jesus crucified ever in her mind, in her heart, and on her tongue; His influence appeared in all the actions of her life, for she lived in Him and by Him, and could well say with the Apostle of the Gentiles: "For me to live is Christ."

May God forever blessed grant that the example of St. Clare may be of avail to free our age from its sensual inclinations; that the light of her virtues may shed its beams on the minds and hearts of men, and the miraculous character of her actions inflame them with a holy ardor in endeavoring to imitate her. In this way the intentions of our holy mother the Church will be fully realized, and the hand of Divine Providence, which so jealously watches over that Church, will appear still more visible in guiding her to raise to the honors of her altars the sainted virgin of Montefalco.

APPENDIX.

WE subjoin here a literal translation from the Latin of two decrees of the Sacred Congregation of Rites. The first was issued during the pontificate of Pius IX. and the other during that of the present Pope, Leo XIII. We have already explained at some length the reason why the decree issued under Pius IX. was not carried into effect, and why another decree was issued by the present reigning Pontiff, and therefore we refer our reader for the explanation of this matter to the thirty-first chapter, in which we treat of the Resumption of the Cause of St. Clare.

DECREE CONCERNING HER VIRTUES.

DECREE OF THE CANONIZATION

OF

BLESSED CLARE OF THE CROSS OF MONTEFALCO,

Professed Nun of the Order of Hermits of St. Augustine.

A previous apostolic dispensation having been granted August 28, 1846, for the discussion of the question concerning the virtues of Blessed Clare of the Cross of Montefalco, professed nun of the Order of Hermits of St. Augustine, which discussion, according to the decrees, should precede any further action in her cause, and should be carried on in the ordinary Congregation of Sacred Rites, without the presence or vote of the Consultors, no one but the prelates attached to said Congregation giving their opinion on the matter; and the following question having been proposed by His

Eminence Cardinal Constantine Patrizi, Vicar of the City and Relater of the cause, at the humble request of Rev. Father Nicholas Primavera, Assistant-General of the above-mentioned Order and Postulator of said cause, namely—*Is it so certain that the afore-mentioned Beata was possessed of the theological and cardinal virtues and their accessories in a heroic degree that the discussion of her miracles may take place?*—and this question having been duly discussed, their Eminences the Cardinals and the Most Rev. Fathers attached to said Congregation, assembled in ordinary meeting at the Vatican Palace on the day subscribed, having maturely weighed and examined all the points adduced in the case, and having heard the Rev. Father Andrew Mary Frattini, Promotor of the Faith, who exposed his opinion both orally and in writing, and having paid express attention to the peculiar circumstances occurring in this case, have deemed it good to make the following reply: *That the point in question is so certain that further measures may be taken; that is to say, her canonization may be proceeded with after the discussion and approbation of two miracles only.* Seventh day of September, 1850.

I, the subscribed secretary, having laid before our Most Holy Lord Pius IX., Pope, a faithful report of all these proceedings, His Holiness graciously approved of them, confirmed the rescript of the Sacred Congregation, and gave permission to proceed with the canonization of the afore-mentioned Blessed Clare after due proof of two miracles only; and this, all decrees to the contrary notwithstanding, especially the decree of July 17, 1754.

The thirteenth day of said month and year.

A. Card. Lambruschini,
Prefect of Sacred Congregation of Rites.

Loco ✠ Sigilli. J. G. Fatati,
Secretary of Sacred Congregation of Rites.

DECREE CONCERNING HER MIRACLES.

DECREE OF THE CANONIZATION
OF
BLESSED CLARE OF THE CROSS OF MONTEFALCO,

Nun of the Order of St. Augustine,

On the Question:

"Are her miracles beyond doubt; and if so, what are the miracles which have a bearing on the end proposed?"

Blessed Clare of the Cross of Montefalco, Nun of the Order of Hermits of St. Augustine, died a happy death, full of virtues and merits, August 17, A.D. 1308, in about the fortieth year of her age. As her name indicates, she conceived an ardent love for the Cross from the first dawn of reason, and meditated daily on the Passion of Christ with an affection of soul which grew continually more fervent and intense. For this reason God endowed her whilst living with many heavenly gifts and made her famous after death by many miracles. The faithful began to venerate Blessed Clare immediately after her decease, and the Bishop of Spoleto deemed it advisable to institute an inquiry into her life and virtues. Very many prelates, cities, and provinces implored the Sovereign Pontiff, John XXII., in repeated petitions, to declare by solemn decree the pre-eminent character of the sanctity of the holy nun. The Sovereign Pontiff, being extremely desirous of acquiescing in the wishes of so many of the faithful, ordered, in accordance with the discipline of the time, an apostolic inquiry to be set on foot on two different occasions into the life, virtues, and miracles of Blessed Clare, and then handed over the reports for examination to three most learned men, cardinals of the Holy Roman Church. Wherefore, in about the eighteenth year from the death of Blessed Clare, a report of the apostolic inquiry was drawn up by these Most Reverend Cardinals, from which it was abundantly

evident that this Servant of God had excelled in the practice of Christian perfection and that God Himself had borne witness to her sanctity by the copious and constant testimony of miracles. This report, as is told by historians worthy of credit, was read in the consistory in presence of John XXII., and this Pontiff was on the point of enrolling Blessed Clare among the Saints, and would have done so, just as he had already raised several other holy persons to the honors of the altars, had not the peace of the Church been at that time disturbed by a serious schism. But in process of time the Apostolic See, moved by the widespread reputation for sanctity of St. Clare, as well as by the divine argument of her miracles, not only formally approved of and helped to spread the veneration paid her, but also permitted her name to be inscribed in the Martyrology, together with a notice of the wonderful emblems of the Lord's Passion, which are extant in her heart even at the present day. Finally, when in this our time the question was mooted concerning the resumption of the cause of Blessed Clare, Pius IX. of holy memory confirmed the vote of the Sacred Congregation of Rites on September 13, 1850, decreeing "*that the virtues of Blessed Clare are so clearly proven that further measures may be taken; that is to say, her canonization may be proceeded with after the discussion and approbation of two miracles only.*"

In consideration, therefore, of this decree, by which her virtues are approved of, likewise by reason of her great reputation for sanctity, and the lasting glory of the prodigies which are to be seen in the heart of Blessed Clare, and which have been long a subject of admiration, our most holy Lord Leo XIII., Pope, following recent examples, has deemed it suitable to proceed to her canonization, since the truth of her miracles is placed beyond question by the arguments drawn from the apostolic investigation, and long since laid before the consistory in proof of the same. In this manner the

process begun under John XXII. with such favorable auspices will be brought to a happy termination by a supreme decision, and Blessed Clare will be enrolled amongst the holy virgins who form so great an ornament of the Church. This happy issue was brought about especially by the fact that the extraordinary excellence of her virtues and life shone forth in nothing more eminently than in her fervent and assiduous love of the Cross and Passion of Jesus Christ. So fervently and incessantly did she meditate upon these mysteries of man's Redemption that God was pleased by a prodigy hitherto unheard of to impress and engrave on her heart the representation of the instruments of the Lord's Passion, which had been long before engraven on her mind. By this visible testimony and by the lasting character of the miracle the remembrance of Christ's Passion is recommended in a wonderful manner for the meditation of all who witness it. We may then cherish the hope that in these our times, when the love of the Cross has grown very cold in Christian society, and there are many enemies of the Cross of Christ, whose God is their belly and whose glory is in confusion, as the Apostle formerly lamented, it has happened by divine disposition that this Virgin, who was most devout towards the Cross and Passion of Our Lord, should be raised to the supreme honors of the altar, so that through her example and prayers the love of the Cross and a zeal for it might be revived in the hearts and habits and daily life of Christians. Our most holy Lord, weighing all these things in his mind, entrusted to the Sacred Congregation of Rites, by a decree of April 26, of the current year, the examination and consideration of the miracles which were reported in the aforesaid apostolic investigation as having been wrought through the intercession of Blessed Clare. In the mean time, the authentic acts of the report of the afore-mentioned apostolic investigation concerning the virtues and

miracles of this Servant of God were found, contrary to all hope, not without the assistance of Clare herself. Of these miracles, which were very numerous, the cardinals who formed the committee of examination of the report had mentioned in their report thirty-five with all circumstances, even the most minute.

Wherefore, in a particular congregation held at the Vatican on July 30 of this year, according to the aforesaid decree, the Most Rev. Cardinal Thomas Mary Martinelli, Relater of the Cause, proposed the following question: "*Are her miracles beyond doubt; and if so, what are the miracles which have a bearing on the end proposed?*" Out of the thirty-five miracles which had been proposed in this case to the Sovereign Pontiff John XXII., the Sacred Congregation discussed and maturely weighed six as being more eminent than the rest, and declared its opinion concerning each of these in the affirmative. Our most holy Lord gladly received this opinion August 11, it being faithfully reported to him by me the undersigned secretary. But he declared that, before he confirmed this decision, the divine light should be implored in a matter of such importance.

Accordingly, by the inspiration of God, His Holiness finally appointed this day, the fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost, on which to pronounce his decretory sentence. Wherefore, having previously offered up the Holy Sacrifice in his private chapel, he entered the most noble hall of the Vatican Palace, and, seated on his throne, called to him the Most Rev. Cardinal Camillus di Pietro, Bishop of Ostia and Velletri and Dean of the Sacred College, in place of the Most Rev. Cardinal Dominic Bartolini, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, then absent from Rome, and the Most Rev. Cardinal Thomas Mary Martinelli, Relater of the Cause, together with the Rev. Father Lawrence Salvati, Promotor of the Holy Faith, and me the undersigned secretary, and in presence of the above-mentioned persons solemnly de-

clared, whilst confirming the decision of the aforesaid Congregation, *that the following six miracles were beyond all doubt*, namely:

I. The wonderful representation of the mysteries of the Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ found in the heart of Blessed Clare—a miracle of the first-class;

Likewise the instantaneous and perfect cure of

VI. The boy, Cetto Speranza, of a monstrous *varus* of the feet contracted from his birth;

VII. The youth, Antony Romanone, of an inveterate lameness, together with contraction of the left leg, ankylosis, and other grave symptoms;

XV. Flora Nicolai, of a complete and inveterate *prolapsus uteri;*

XIX. The child, Lucarello Jacometti, of a cancer of the eyes, together with blindness, and an enormous wasting away of the eye-balls which protruded from their sockets;

XXIII. The cleric, Chino Rinalducci, of an inveterate inguinal *hernia* on the right side;

And therefore, considering the decree already issued in approbation of her virtues and all the other measures which had been duly taken in the cause, that the solemn Canonization of Blessed Clare of the Cross may be safely proceeded with.

He then ordered that a decree to this effect be made public, and be enrolled in the acts of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, and that Apostolic letters concerning the solemnities of her canonization to be celebrated at any future date be issued under the leaden seal on September 11, 1881.

For His Eminence

THE MOST REV. LORD CARDINAL DOMINIC BARTOLINI,
Prefect of the Sacred Congregation of Rites,
CAMILLUS CARDINAL DI PIETRO,
Bishop of Ostia and Velletri.

Loco ✠ Sigilli. PLACIDUS RALLI,
Secretary of the Sacred Congregation of Rites.

THE HEART OF ST. CLARE OF MONTEFALCO.

BY ELEANOR C. DONNELLY.

Living, she fed her heart upon the food
  Of Christ's dear Passion; brooded night and day
Upon the Cross, the Nails, the Lance, the Blood,
  The Thorns which crown'd His temples, bruised and gray.

Dying, they found within her heart, wide-riven,
  The symbols of that Passion, pure and fine,
Sculptured as tho' from ivory,—great Heaven!
  The mystic carving of a Hand Divine!

The Cross, the Nails, the Lance, the Crown of Thorns,
  The Sponge that held the vinegar and gall,—
The Passion-Flower treasures, while it mourns,
  The same blest symbols in its calyx small.

O Heart of Montefalco's sainted Clare!
  Thou wert the Passion-Flower of our Lord,
For in thy depths, as in that floweret fair,
  The emblems of His love and grief were stored.

Pray for us then, dear Saint, this Passion tide,
  The while our hearts take root in Calvary's sod;
They, there, may blossom, shrines of the Crucified,
  Sweet Passion-Flowers of a suffering God!

NOTE.—This poem was written for the *Catholic Chronicle* of Bay City, Michigan, and, with the permission of its editor, Mr. J. W. S. Norris, and of the author, is inserted here. In order to understand the allusions in these verses, Chapter XXVIII. of this book should be read.

THE END.

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